



Outlook

Greg Robertson of Artworks Takes “Best in Show!”

We are thrilled to announce that Garth Homer Society ArtWorks artist Greg Robertson has won “Best in Show” at the 13th annual regional Look Show!



Greg Robertson's winning piece, *Vancouver Bridge*

Greg receives his award from collector Fran Willis and Bob Williams of the Community Arts Council

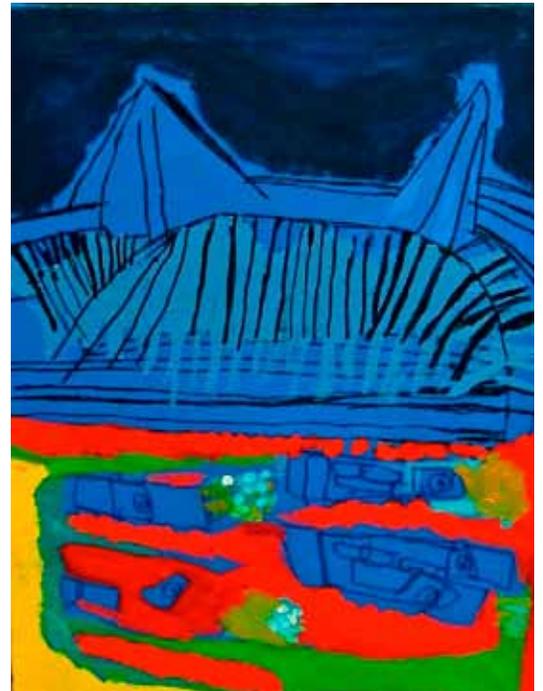
Greg took the award with his painting Vancouver Bridge. Awards were given on April 26 at the opening reception, held on the lower level of the Bay Centre in downtown Victoria. Former gallery owner Fran Willis and Times Colonist art critic Robert Amos juried the art show. Greg received a cash award of \$200 for his winning painting, which Fran Willis purchased.

The Community Arts Council of Greater Victoria hosted the Look Show,

Vancouver Island's largest art show, which featured over 500 works of art by more than 300 local artists.

The show featured nine ArtWorks artists: Andrew Wagner, David Whiting, Tanya Steinhausen, Ashley Haagensen, Greg Robertson, Phil Davis, Cara Johnson, Katherine Woods, and Josefina Mena.

Congratulations to Greg and all the other participating ArtWorks artists!.



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The Garth Homer Foundation

by Judith Scott
Chair, Garth Homer Foundation

It's been a busy time at the Garth Homer Foundation as we get ramped up to expand our support for the important work of GHS. In May, we contracted with fundraising consultant Gwen Chapman to work with us over the coming year to run our direct mail program and to help us develop a long-term fundraising strategy. Gwen has extensive experience as both a senior fundraising executive and as a consultant, in Canada and abroad. She has produced our mailings since last fall. Her first major task for the coming year will be an analysis of our fundraising database. Once that is completed, we will be looking at ways our mailing program can be made more productive. In addition, she will be starting work on major-gift and planned-giving activities.

Welcome, Gwen,
it's great to have you on the team!

In June, the foundation received and was happy to approve a grant request from GHS for support for the purchase of 12 iPads that will help to enhance the learning component in all its programs. We were all quite interested to hear about the tremendous impact that iPads can have in helping people with developmental disabilities to communicate and learn more effectively. The grant for purchasing the iPads will in part be supported by funding from the Butchart Gardens Wishing Pond Fund.

And speaking of the Wishing Pond Fund, we have recently received another batch of coins from Butchart Gardens to keep the fund growing. Thanks again to Butchart Gardens for donating the coins from its pond to the Garth Homer Foundation. One of

the tasks we need to complete before we can take the donated coins to the bank is to clean, sort, and count them, and remove any foreign currency from the pile. Starting with this installment, we will be hiring a young person with a developmental disability to be our official coin sorter.

And finally, our thanks to Scott Taylor and friends for continuing the golf tradition at Garth Homer. Many of you will know that we suspended our golf tournament this year because of diminishing returns. However, the core group of golfers who had supported the tournament year after year decided to go ahead with their game in any case! They held their own event at Uplands Golf Course on May 14 and raised over \$1,200 for GHS and the foundation. Thank you, Scott and friends, for your initiative and continuing commitment!



Thanks, Judith Scott

To contact the Garth Homer Foundation:
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PROGRAM NEWS

Meet Our New Director of Geriatric Services!

With generous funding from the United Way of Greater Victoria, GHS has been able to hire Phemie Guttin as our Director of Geriatric Services. This is a new position at GHS, one made necessary by the aging of so many of our program participants and by the rapid expansion of Pathways, our program for older adults with developmental disabilities.



A registered nurse, Phemie only recently moved to Victoria from Ottawa, where she was the director of operations for Alavida Lifestyles, an operator of retirement homes. She has extensive experience in the design and delivery of care and services for older adults, including dementia care. Earlier in her career, Phemie ran a group home providing service to individuals with both disabilities and mental health problems, so she has a good understanding of special-needs clients.

We anticipate that, in the next 12 months, Pathways will grow by as much as 30 percent from internal transitions alone. Over the next few years, the increase in the number of older clients will be even faster. As we look forward to renovating the Garth Homer Centre in order to accommodate our aging program participants, we will be relying on Phemie's skill and experience in facilities development to help create the ideal space and services for our older participants.

Welcome, Phemie!

A Quiet Room for Pals

One of the big challenges we face as our clients grow older is accommodating the developing needs of those with dementia.

Right now, about half of the clients in Pathways, our service for people in later life, show signs of dementia. These are the participants in our Pals program. Many people with dementia, including several of our program participants, have difficulty with busy, bustling environments that can cause them to feel a lot of stress and anxiety. The Garth Homer Centre can be very busy place at times, especially at lunchtime and at the beginning and end of the day, when almost everyone is in the hallways at the same time, waiting for their transportation, getting their coats and packs, or hustling off to the auditorium for lunch.

When things get loud and crowded, it is important that we be able to provide some relief to those who are acutely sensitive to the bustle.

That's why we have decided to take a small office space next to Pals, expand it a little, and equip it as a quiet room — a calm oasis in the middle of all the busyness where clients can go for a time-out until their anxiety subsides. We will be making the needed renovations and equipping the room with soft lighting, comfy furniture, and relaxing music in part using some of the funds already provided in our existing United Way grant. At the time of this writing construction is already underway — the old wall has been moved and the new drywall is up, ready to be finished. We hope to have the quiet room equipped and ready before the end of the summer.



CARF Accreditation



GHS has received its Three-Year Accreditation from CARF International. CLBC requires that a certified accrediting body formally survey and accredit all the programs and organizations it funds. This is the fourth time since accreditation of

community living organizations began in BC that GHS has achieved it for the full three-year term.

“CARF” stands for the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities. Through accreditation, CARF assists service providers in improving the quality of their services, demonstrating value, and

meeting internationally recognized organizational and program standards. The accreditation process applies sets of standards to service areas and business practices during an intensive on-site survey. Accreditation, however, is an ongoing process, signalling to the public that a service provider is committed to continuously improving services, encouraging feedback,

and serving the community. Accreditation also demonstrates a provider's commitment to enhance its performance, manage its risk, and distinguish its service delivery.

CARF's notice of accreditation for GHS said, “This achievement is an indication of your organization's dedication and commitment to improving the lives of the

persons served. Services, personnel, and documentation clearly indicate an established pattern of practice excellence.”

Our survey took place last April, and we received news of our three-year accreditation in May. It was our best and most useful survey to date. Our surveyors were excellent and have provided us with much

helpful feedback on how we can enhance services.

Many thanks to Mary Ann Snowden, our director of quality assurance, for leading the accreditation process, and to all staff who worked so hard to make the survey a success.

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www.garthhomer.com

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PROGRAM NEWS

A Sign of the Times in DISCOVERY

There are two things in which we believe strongly at GHS. First, that everyone can learn, develop, and grow. And second, that everyone can participate and contribute.

Clearly the two are related. The more people learn, the more they can participate, the more choices they have. And the more they participate, the more they learn. We try to make sure that our program participants have ample opportunities for both.

Consider what's going on in DISCOVERY, our program for people who have difficulties expressing themselves. Since 2001, first in our Community Access Team (CAT) and now in DISCOVERY, staff have been running a successful and innovative project helping clients learn to speak better through sign language. Having learned to sign, clients then go out into the community to teach signing to elementary school children.

"It's a win-win all around," says Virve Hiltunen, DISCOVERY's team coordinator. "Our people first improve their verbal skills, and then by teaching what they know to children, they improve their confidence and self-esteem. I can tell you the school kids just love it – they always end up with big smiles. And as for our clients, when they are able to speak better and with greater confidence, they have enhanced opportunities for inclusion in other ways."

Currently, the DISCOVERY team is working with Torquay Elementary School in Gordon Head on delivery of the program.



William Bates and Deanne McKinney teaching signing to children



William signs as Deanne observes

Torquay Kindergarten teacher Genevieve Crane is excited about the collaboration. "It has been a truly amazing experience," she says. "I have watched the children go from their first uncertain signs to being 'little masters' of signs. They can sign the alphabet, feelings, numbers, colours, animals, special-event vocabulary, days of the week, and so much more. Signing empowers shy, quiet students to share feelings in a safe way and communicate with teacher and classmates."

Genevieve also notes that the signing classes give her students the opportunity to meet and become familiar with people of different abilities. "At our school, there are very few children with different abilities. The children regard our helpers, William, Ashley, and Deanne, as sign-language 'experts' and have formed a deep attachment to them."

Because it is easier to learn, the team teaches signed English, not American Sign Language, which people who are deaf commonly use. What is so innovative is the way the team has found to teach signed English – they match the signs to words in well-known songs. Clients learn to sign as they listen and sing. Right now, they are working with Louis Armstrong's version of It's a Wonderful World.

"The process is a bit mysterious," says Virve. "From music, to signing, to speech. Once a word is learned in sign language, it is clear that it becomes easier to learn to speak it as well."

DISCOVERY participants taking part in the sign-language program are William Bates, Deanne McKinney, Peter Perry, Bryce Nixon, Ken Lealls, and Ashley Penney.

New GHS Employees at Best Buy in Uptown

GHS Employment Services participant Lidia White has always loved using electronics. She was drawn to working at Best Buy because she wanted the chance to learn more about them. Indeed, Lidia feels the opportunity to gain skills is one of the best parts of working for Best Buy. "I've been able to learn lots of new things," she says. "I really enjoy looking up titles for customers in our computer system, and I'm getting trained on cash already. That is surprising because I've only been there a few months."

Nicholas LaPointe, another GHS client who works for Best Buy, agrees and adds one more reason: "I really enjoy the friendly atmosphere that my colleagues provide, whether it's on the floor or in the back room."

From the beginning, Best Buy recognized the positive contribution Lidia and Nick could each make to the store's existing workforce. Andrew Razzo, operation manager at Best Buy, explains: "We knew that the two candidates we interviewed would help to foster the sense of family we feel for one another at Best Buy. It's been an excellent experience working with Lidia and Nick so far. It's amazing the skills they bring to the table. Lidia's memory for details, for instance, helps her find titles of movies for customers with excellent accuracy."

Similarly, Nick enjoys overcoming barriers and being known for his abilities. This includes pushing a cart full of product while steering his wheelchair at the same time, or reaching up to the top shelf to put new stock out, just as his team members would.



Lidia White working at Best Buy

Lidia and Nick are skilled, valued, and very much a part of the Best Buy team. They look forward to having engaging careers with Best Buy in the future, as does their employer.

Andrew has advice for other employers considering hiring a client of GHS: "While everyone's business needs are different, if you are interested, give them an interview and consider it; you never know who you will discover."

FUNDRAISING UPDATES

Gaming

GHS has received a \$100,000 Community Gaming Grant from the BC government. The grant provides operating funds for our Computer Resource Centre (CRC) in the 2012/13 fiscal year.

The CRC is a unique facility dedicated to providing digital learning, social skills development, recreation, and online community engagement to our program participants. It was established in 1996 with support from IBM Canada, the Vancouver Foundation, the Pacific Coast Savings Foundation, the Koerner Foundation, and local Rotary clubs.

Used regularly by 56 of our program participants, the CRC is located in a fully accessible space housing one Macintosh and 10 Windows workstations. They are adapted for accessibility with tools such as touch screens, IntelliKey programmable keyboards, and accessible software.

Users of the CRC book an average of 146 sessions every week for a wide variety of activities. The CRC maintains a library of 130 different software packages, of which the most frequently used are those for learning problem solving and improving memory skills. Other learning tools help participants learn computer basics, math, and how to tell time, read, and speak other languages. Clients also use the CRC to access social media, stay connected with family and friends, play games, listen to music, and watch movies.

Until 2011, the CRC was supported through general funding provided by CLBC, but that funding is no longer available. The Community Gaming Grant gives us a year to reassess how we operate the CRC, to seek new sources of support, and to begin integrating new technology such as iPads.

A Useful Gift in Kind

And speaking of the CRC, many thanks to our good friend David Forrest who has donated two high-quality computer tables for use in the CRC. They are much appreciated.

GHS is happy to accept gifts in kind for which we have a real use and for which we can establish a fair value, and to provide a charitable receipt for such gifts. If you have something that you would like to donate for use in our programs, contact Hayley Flood at 250-475-2270, ext. 225, to determine whether we can use it.

FUNDRAISING UPDATES

Support for High School Transition

During a board meeting last winter, the idea came up that GHS should be working to help young special needs students make the transition from high school. One of our board members also sits on the Parents Advisory Council at Oak Bay High, and she suggested that we might want to consider collaborating with the special needs staff there on a joint transition pilot project.

Out of this simple discussion came a great project idea that is now going full speed ahead thanks to inspired funding and support from both Coast Capital Savings and the TELUS Victoria Community Board.

GHS and Oak Bay High are working together on the High School Transition Pilot Program. The aim of the program is to help high school students in special needs programs, and their families, to prepare and make effective choices concerning community inclusion, support programs, and employment after graduation.

Involving Oak Bay students from grades 10 to 12, the program will offer experiential learning opportunities that allow participants to gain independent learning about the different possibilities open to them. The varied experiences provided — such as employment internships, post-secondary opportunities, volunteer participation, or other community inclusion activities — will allow students to make informed choices about their futures. They will also allow the program facilitators to provide new perspective for individual students, their families, and others involved in their support, on each student's potential to transition effectively after graduation, and to succeed and develop in different situations.



Effective transition on school leaving is vital for young adults with developmental disabilities. It will help to maintain their learning and progress towards inclusion, and to ensure that they get access to appropriate supports in adult life.

Coast Capital Savings got the project started with an initial grant of \$5,000 that enabled us to hire a facilitator before the end of the school year. This meant that we could begin work in June with the special needs staff at Oak Bay High, will be able to do program research and planning over the summer, and get off to a running start with the students in September.

Kudos to Coast for seeing the need and stepping up to ensure that we got the funding in time.

The TELUS Victoria Community Board followed up with a grant of \$20,000 that will easily carry the program through to the end of the calendar year. Great stuff! And with the TELUS grant, we have 50% of the needed project funding in place. That has made it much easier to go out to other funders for the balance of support. We are confident that we will be able to finish raising the rest of the funds needed in the fall. Thanks TELUS.

We have great hopes for this project. If the pilot succeeds, we will aim at rolling it out to other schools in September 2013. We have already heard from some that would like to join in.

The Lasting Value of a Legacy Gift

Over the past year, GHS has been named a beneficiary of two estates. In both cases, the gift is being shared with other charitable organizations.

This is great news and not only because these gifts will provide much-needed funding at a critical time. The real value in this story is that it reminds people that naming GHS as a beneficiary in their estate planning is a terrific way to make a lasting legacy gift. Many people who support the work of GHS and give regularly to it would like to help even more but find doing so difficult while they still have bills to pay. By naming GHS as a beneficiary in their will, supporters can make a high-impact gift that will help in a major way to ensure our long-term sustainability. Now that's a real legacy!

CEO Report – The Learning Imperative

I've been thinking about it lately, and I am not convinced that it is helpful or accurate to call what we do here at GHS "day services." We really need another way of talking about ourselves – of describing what we do and the difference we make.

I am still pretty much the new guy here. But more and more, as I grow increasingly familiar with the services GHS provides, I am coming to understand that learning and personal development are what we are all about.

Within the developmental disabilities sector, the term "day services" has come to apply to day-long group programs offered outside of residential support. And while such services are highly valued by participants and by the families and caregivers that use them, other people see these services as a lingering and unfortunate legacy from the days of institutionalization and sheltered workshops. In this view, day services are part of the problem, a barrier to inclusion and citizenship.

This polarization of views misses the point, however. Think of public schools. In the sense noted above, they are "day services" too, but nobody would ever think of

calling them that. That their programs are provided during the day is incidental to their real purpose – the education and preparation of young people for adult life. In other words, it's what we do with the days that really matters.

This newsletter contains a great example of the learning focus in our programs. Consider the remarkable and highly innovative sign-language project in DISCOVERY. Since 2001, clients in DISCOVERY have been learning signed English and then teaching it to public school kids. This could seem like a mere "make busy" project, but when you look more deeply, you learn that the project helps clients improve both verbal capabilities and confidence. In short, it helps them do and be more. With better verbal skills and a little boost to their confidence, clients are increasingly able to meet the world on their own terms.

Other examples of a similar learning focus in our programs are easy to find once you look for them. A great one is the CAT clients who work as volunteers on a restoration project at the Horticultural Centre of the Pacific under the direction of a biologist. They haven't just done the grunt work of digging and planting, but they have had a hands-on role in conducting a study of creek water levels and developing the engineering report. This is learning by doing that increases both practical skills and confidence, and helps prepare clients for new opportunities for inclusion.

And then there's the young man in DREAMS who now uses an iPad to manage his own schedule. Or the participant in Employment Services who is using software in the CRC to learn to type so that she can strengthen her résumé and seek a better job. Or, also in DISCOVERY, the woman who has developed the skills to travel to and participate in her Aquafit class independently. Or the client in Pathways who learned to read in the CRC so that he could advocate with his local Starbucks for an automated door opener.

The point is, these cases are not the exception at GHS; they are the rule. At heart we are an organization dedicated to learning and personal development, a dedication that is built into each of our programs and into every individual plan. The value of learning for the people who come to us cannot be overestimated. Lifelong learning and personal growth, at whatever level is possible for the individual, are the keys to inclusion, independence, and choice.

Though it's what we do every day, we have never really thought of ourselves at GHS as an organization dedicated to learning. But understanding this is a key strategic insight for our future, and for our ability both to adapt to the demands of an aging client population and to meet the emerging needs of a new generation of young people with developmental disabilities, and their families. Whatever we do next, I suspect that an enhanced focus on learning will need to be a big part of it.

Mitchell Temkin



Laurie Fairweather of CAT takes a measurement at the Horticultural Centre of the Pacific

EVENTS

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Mark your calendars, The Garth Homer Society's annual general meeting will be held on September 12 this year. Stay tuned for a future announcement on the time and place.

COMMUNITY ACCESS TEAM OPEN HOUSE

On Thursday October 11, the Community Access Team (CAT) program will be holding an open house to showcase its remarkable volunteer projects, including its exciting Africa Project. Running all afternoon, the open house will give visitors a chance to meet our CAT participants and hear from them directly about the great work they do in their projects. Don't miss it!

GHS ARTWORKS CHRISTMAS CARDS!

The Garth Homer Society will be offering cards for sale for the Christmas season this year. Based on wonderful paintings created by ArtWorks artists, we are planning for the cards to be produced in both print and online versions. The cards will be available for purchase in September, but if you would like to be on the list in order to get advance notice of their availability, you can email your name and contact information to xmascards@garthhomersociety.org, or call Jennifer at 250-475-2270 and let her know about your interest.

UPCOMING GHS ARTWORKS EVENTS

July 9 to August 31

"Artworks Summer Exhibition" featuring works by current ArtWorks participants; in the Karin Koerner Gallery at 813 Darwin Avenue.

September 13 to October 12

Recent work by Cara Johnson and Ashley Haagensen; in the Karin Koerner Gallery at 813 Darwin Avenue

October 16 to 28

"ArtWorks at the Cedar Hill Gallery Café;" Cedar Hill Recreation Centre, 3220 Cedar Hill Road.

To be announced

This fall ArtWorks artists will be participating in the Luminara Moon Festival and in an exhibition at Emily Carr House. Stay tuned for the details!



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