



Outlook

Work Experience Helps Ease High School Transition

Transition pilot program provides opportunities to develop workplace skills

On Thursday, November 8, Nick put on a nametag and apron for his first work experience shift at the Fairway Market on Shelbourne Street.

The following Tuesday, Kyra kicked off her work experience term at the Market on Yates with the comment, "I work hard so I can get the job done."

Kyra and Nick are part of the High School Transition Pilot Program developed by Garth Homer Society (GHS) and Oak Bay High. The experiential learning program provides special needs students with opportunities to develop employment skills and learn about future personal development options.

Every Tuesday and Thursday morning through November and December, Nick interacted with Fairway customers as he bagged their grocery items. He made sure he took his breaks on time by learning to read the analog clock in the break room and he put a smile on everyone's face when

he tried out a few dance steps while sweeping the store floors.

A key goal of the pilot program is to identify and build on students' strengths to help with future employment and learning opportunities. Research indicates that for young people with challenges, having some employment experience before graduation is associated with future success in the workplace. Kyra took on the duties of a front store service clerk and can now add time management, punctuality and prioritizing to her list of workplace skills.

Thanks to pilot program funding from Coast Capital Savings and the Telus Community Board, 10 special needs students from Oak Bay High will gain valuable employment experience over the 2012–2013 school year. The Vancouver Foundation has also recently committed funding to help GHS expand the pilot program to Saanich schools in 2013.



Kyra and Nick at work during the High School Transition Pilot Program.

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PROGRAM NEWS

Geriatrics Programming

Providing effective services to older clients means integrating health supports with community living programs and activities

If you've visited the Garth Homer Centre lately, you may have noticed aging clients taking a break in the quiet room, participating in a chair-based exercise program or wearing a tag to alert staff if they wander out of the building. These are just some of the initiatives recently introduced as part of Garth Homer Society's geriatrics programming.

It is now more usual than not for adults with developmental disabilities to live longer and experience the general challenges associated with aging. GHS currently has 33 clients in geriatrics programs, and expects this number to rise significantly in the next four to five years as more clients transition into old age.

Caring for aging adults with developmental disabilities requires increased attention to personal health care needs. On a daily basis, GHS staff help older clients

take their medication, attend to toileting and use the quiet room to manage their anxiety. In addition, the nature and degree of a developmental disability may increase the risk of dementia and staff need to be aware of changes in client behavior and cognitive ability.

Overall, GHS is working to integrate health care support for community living clients with regular programming. "We're facing new challenges that we haven't seen before," says GHS Director of Geriatric Services, Phemie Guttin. "But, through training and investment in health care services, we can adjust our programming and better support our clients as they age."

In November 2012, GHS hosted a well-attended community workshop for caregivers who work with aging adults with developmental disabilities. More than 45 caregivers and professionals attended the session and learned best practices for caring for clients at risk of dementia. Following the workshop, GHS staff trained for a week to learn how to use cognitive ability baselines to track and monitor clients at risk of dementia.

"It's difficult to diagnosis adults with developmental disabilities with dementia," says Phemie. "Staff need to know the person and have a baseline that includes medical history and functional and cognitive abilities to really identify any shifts in behavior or abilities."

Over the next six months, a small team of GHS staff will develop baseline assessments for GHS geriatric clients. Using a baseline screening tool for clients, GHS can adjust programs to better meet the needs of aging clients.

Caring for the aging – those with or without development disabilities – is time consuming and requires significant attention to personal health care and strong knowledge of geriatrics. Accordingly, Phemie, a registered nurse, is working to build a stronger relationship between GHS and the Vancouver Island Health Authority to help bolster health care support at the Garth Homer Centre.

At the centre itself, GHS is investing in personal health care facilities. Aging GHS clients will soon benefit from the installation of a new toilet facility, thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor. This new amenity will enable GHS staff to better support clients during toileting and



Cheryl Vandewater is a participant in the GHS Pathways program.

PROGRAM NEWS

prepare them for programming throughout the day.

Looking ahead, Phemie sees GHS expanding its geriatrics programs to accommodate more and more clients. Geriatrics programs are already using different areas of the centre and spaces are being cross-purposed to serve multiple client needs.

“I want us to continue to support clients who have come to the centre for 25–30 years and ensure they continue to have the right level of care and can participate,” explains Phemie.

For many clients, the Garth Homer Centre and GHS programs have been an important, consistent environment throughout their adult lives. The addition of health care support will allow clients to remain in GHS programming for a longer period of time and continue to benefit from the opportunity to make strong social connections, learn and maintain life skills and participate in community inclusion activities.



Alvin Hipke at the Garth Homer Centre.

New Approach To Teaching Health Care Tips

Ken picks up a card with an image of hand soap. He matches this card with one featuring two muddy hands already face up on the table. This card matching exercise is part of a new



Ron Macketuk holds up the new playing cards Virve Demuth is using to teach personal health care at GHS.

approach to teaching personal health care at the Garth Homer Centre.

This spring, staff are using songs, storybooks, iPads, memory cards and art projects to help clients learn about hand washing and other health care prevention methods.

“In the past we used a PowerPoint presentation to show clients how germs were passed on and the importance of not sharing supplies,” says Training and Outreach Coordinator, Virve Demuth. “But everybody has a different learning style, so we’ve tried to find new and more hands-on ways to teach these important health tips.”

In addition to developing matching cards, Virve has modified a book of short stories to demonstrate important hand washing tips. As Virve reads the book with clients, they sing along to a hand washing song that highlights how long it takes to thoroughly wash one’s

hands. Clients can listen to the story as a podcast and Virve is also able to sign the story to deaf clients at the centre.

Each training session Virve leads is geared towards a specific audience. For example, the GHS ArtWorks program teaches health prevention skills through the drawing and painting of pictures of germs and how people and objects pass them along.

Every year, Virve delivers health precaution training workshops to staff and clients and she is looking forward to seeing how clients receive the new teaching methods.

“I’ve invited program staff to sit in on the presentations as well,” says Virve. “They know GHS clients the best and will be able to provide great feedback on the exercises and areas for improvement.”

FUNDRAISING UPDATES

GHS Staff Raise Funds For United Way Campaign



First-time fundraising efforts surpass goal

In fall 2012, Garth Homer Society staff came together to take part in the United Way of Greater Victoria's annual community fundraising campaign. The United Way has worked for over 75 years in Greater Victoria to support the health and well-being of the community, including providing funding for the GHS Pathways program.

This was the first workplace campaign in support of the United Way by GHS staff. Phemie Guttin, Director of Geriatric Services, took the lead in working with staff teams to organize fundraising events from October to December 2012. Each

staff team found creative ways to raise funds, from hosting car washes to offering hot-lunch days and organizing an art auction.

In total, the GHS workplace fundraising campaign doubled its goal and raised nearly \$2,000 for the United Way. In recognition of the generosity of GHS staff, the Garth Homer Foundation doubled its matching contribution and in early 2013, the United Way received a cheque for almost \$6,000. In thanks, the United Way recognized GHS staff for their successful first-time fundraising efforts by presenting Phemie with an award on their behalf. Well done!



You Make It Possible

Thank you for your financial support



Deanne at work in the ArtWorks program.

The Garth Homer Foundation's year-end fundraising campaign focused on the immense courage of clients like Deanne, who succeed in becoming increasingly independent and involved in the community.

Deanne has Down syndrome. She is reserved and really artistic. She also loves swimming. So, four years ago, as part

of Deanne's community inclusion program, GHS staff enrolled her in a community aquafit program. Today, Deanne is an accepted, regular member of the ladies' aquafit class.

Deanne has participated in group activities through GHS for years and has been an active artist in our ArtWorks program. She now has increased confidence and is participating in additional community activities, like the aquafit classes, that reflect an elevated level of independence and decision-making.

Customized support and community involvement programs make all the difference for Garth Homer clients. We're only able to provide this level of individualized support because of the generosity of people like you. Thank you for your financial support.

"I like it here. I see my friends. I like puzzles and drawing and painting. I do lots of different things. Garth Homer staff do things especially for me. Thank you for giving to the Garth Homer Foundation," says Deanne.

FUNDRAISING UPDATES

Roger Reid Leaves A Legacy

In late 2012, the Garth Homer Society received a generous legacy gift from Roger Reid



Roger Reid

“Roger’s donations were a reflection of the causes he valued and cared about.”

“Roger lived a simple, quiet life,” says long-time friend, Heather Millen. “But he believed in paying it forward.”

Roger’s brother, Bobbie, was developmentally disabled and lived at the Bethesda Residence in Vineland, Ontario. Roger’s parents were instrumental in starting the residence, which has clients and services similar to those at GHS. For both organizations, public contributions are essential to providing services and equipment. Roger continued his family’s philanthropic tradition by making regular donations to the GHS and naming the society as a beneficiary of his estate.

Roger was born in Ontario and completed a Ph.D. in economics at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario before teaching at various Ontario universities. In 1981, he moved to Victoria to work with the Ministry of Environment, where he was soon known for his quick wit and sharp economic arguments for environmental conservation practices in support of wildlife.

Heather, along with fellow friend, Lloyd Kenward, contacted GHS about the bequest after Roger’s passing in 2011. Roger had never spoken much to Heather or Lloyd about his ongoing or legacy donations, and both were surprised by the substantial size of his gift. Roger never met GHS clients, or toured the Garth Homer Centre, but his bequest will ensure the organization continues to provide developmentally disabled adults with opportunities for inclusion and learning.

“Roger had a quiet, shy personality,” says Lloyd. “But his donations were a reflection of the causes he valued and cared about.”

In recognition of his generous gift, GHS has dedicated a painting from the ArtWorks program to Roger. The painting, now on display in the lobby of the Garth Homer Centre, depicts a log cabin at a lake, a testament to Roger’s love for wilderness areas.

Make A Bequest to Garth Homer

Find out how you can make a lasting difference

Leave a legacy for the people and things you care about most. When you leave a bequest in your will to the Garth Homer Foundation, you will help people with developmental disabilities gain independence and enable them to participate in the community.

Perhaps you’d like to leave the residue of your estate to the Garth Homer Foundation after you’ve taken care of your loved ones. Or perhaps you’d prefer to leave a specific amount, or a percentage of your estate.

To discuss how you could help, or for specific wording, please contact Mitchell Temkin in confidence at (250) 475-2270, or email Mitchell at mtemkin@garthhomersociety.org.

The foundation raises funds primarily for the Garth Homer Society, which provides personal support and learning and development opportunities for people with developmental disabilities.

CEO REPORT

Message From The CEO



As people with developmental disabilities age into later life, day services may be one of the few constants in their changing world

With age, our life issues change. This is true for all of us – both people with developmental disabilities and those without.

For the most part, people with developmental disabilities age much like everyone else: their needs and interests change; their functional abilities change; health problems increase; and they must cope with major life transitions such as retirement, bereavement, and the shrinkage of their social world.

In Pathways, our geriatrics program, we are learning to be responsive to these changes. For example, last fall we began to implement baseline cognitive assessments for all of our Pathways clients, to help us better recognize later life changes in individuals and design supports more targeted to individual needs. We also presented a community workshop on the issue (which some of you may have attended), and as mentioned on the back of this newsletter, this spring we will be offering a workshop on the meaning and management of loss and grief for people with developmental disabilities.

In several critical ways, aging for people with developmental disabilities is more difficult than for others and is fraught with the risk of increased vulnerability.

In part, this relates to health issues.

Older people with developmental disabilities generally have poorer health and a greater need for geriatric supports than do older people without developmental disabilities. This is partly because genetic issues and pre-existing conditions increase both the associated risks with, and impact of, aging. And, it is partly because of life factors such as social isolation, reduced access to health care, impaired communication of health issues, disadvantaged socio-economic status and poor health care in earlier life.

Some of the increased vulnerability relates to supports. Two issues are key.

First, as our clients age into later life, the people in

their support networks are also aging. Family, friends, and caregivers are all getting older themselves and experiencing the effects of aging. The risks to continuity of support are great, especially for older adults with developmental disabilities who are still primarily supported by their families.

Second, for older clients, residential care arrangements may become unstable. This is particularly relevant for those living independently, with family, or in home share, simply because there is no broad staff support. This smaller support network may not have the capacity or the training to respond to the health and functional challenges of later life, especially if transitions are rapid, as they often are for people with developmental disabilities.

The Garth Homer Society completed a research report on aging and developmental disabilities a few years ago. In the report we noted these risks and suggested that for many of our clients, their day services would be the most consistent point of support as they got older. In many ways it is easier for day service providers to be adaptively flexible and responsive as clients age.

Over the last year or so, we have been beginning to see an increased reliance on day services and support among our older clients. We have started to encounter older individuals looking for services for the first time in their lives in later life because their elderly family members can no longer support them. In the past year, several of our participants in Pathways have had to move because their support needs were changing rapidly with age. Some who had been living independently for many years moved into group homes. Others have already changed residence several times in the past few years, in their search for a place to live that can keep up with their rapidly evolving support needs.

Through all this, their friends, activities, and daily routines at the Garth Homer Society have been a reassuring constant – a fixed point in their changing world they can count on every day. As we continue to build our geriatrics programming, providing this continuity for every client who has in part made his or her life with us will be one of our primary goals.

Mitchell

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Lombardi". The signature is fluid and cursive.

FOUNDATION REPORT

Garth Homer Foundation Report

One of the main concerns of the Garth Homer Foundation is the maintenance and future of our facility.

The Garth Homer Society Achievement Centre is an out-of-the-way landmark with deep roots in the community. Located at 813 Darwin Avenue, near Saanich Municipal Hall, the building is nestled at the edge of an old creek valley that runs into Swan Lake.

In 1966, Mr. Garth Homer, a social worker, was the Executive Director of the Community Council of Greater Victoria. Widely respected as a leader in the community,

Today, once again, we are looking at the centre's future.

Mr. Homer was instrumental in creating a social planning service for the Capital Regional Board and in the establishment of

the School of Social Work at the University of Victoria. However, it was during his term at the Community Council that he developed the idea of an achievement centre for people with disabilities.

In 1968, Mr. Homer asked the Arbutus Crafts Association to join with a number of other agencies to develop a central activity centre to meet the needs of adults with disabilities. Designed by well-known local architect

John Di Castri, the 35,000 square foot Garth Homer Society Achievement Centre was opened on May 15, 1977.

Unfortunately, Mr. Homer was not present to see his vision realized, having passed away suddenly in September of the previous year. The centre was named in his memory.

Originally, the centre was built to accommodate sheltered workshops, where clients of the society worked at such trades as weaving, chair caning, and woodworking. But over the last 30 years, people with developmental disabilities have been living their lives more inclusively and independently in the community. In the 1990s, Garth Homer Society closed the last of the workshops and the centre was adapted for new kinds of programming.

Today, once again, we are looking at the centre's future. In 2012, with support from the United Way, we completed an assessment of the centre's structure and systems and were happy to learn that the building remains fundamentally sound. This year we hope to secure funding to complete the much-needed restoration of the roof and to begin detailed planning for interior renovations that will modernize the facility and better adapt it to the emerging needs of a whole new generation of clients. Stay tuned for future plans.

On another note, thank you to our supporters for the great response to our Christmas mailing. Nothing is as important to the future of the Garth Homer Society as the support we receive from individuals who believe in our mission. Your commitment makes everything we do possible.

Thanks, Judith Scott



To contact the Garth Homer Foundation:
 web www.garthhomerfoundation.org
 email admin@garthhomerfoundation.org
 phone 250-812-7896



The Garth Homer Society Achievement Centre.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & EVENTS

RADICAL REELS TOUR

Every year, the Banff Mountain Film and Book Festival presents the wildly popular Radical Reels night. Event proceeds from the Victoria screening will be donated to the Garth Homer Society.

March 15, 2013

7pm screening

Doors open at 6:15pm

Garth Homer Centre

WORKSHOP ON GRIEF AND LOSS

The Garth Homer Society will be hosting a free workshop on grief and loss for families, caregivers and professionals.

April 11, 2013

6:30–8pm

Garth Homer Centre

GARTH HOMER SOCIETY ARTWORKS EVENTS

Look Regional Exhibition

March

Location TBA

The annual Look Exhibition, hosted by the Community Arts Council of Greater Victoria, features more than 500 artists. Last year, ArtWorks artist Greg Robertson won best in show. For more information visit www.cacgv.ca. Check www.garthhomer.com for location.

Saanich Open Studio Tour Exhibition

April 16 to 28

Opening night April 18

Café Gallery at the Cedar Hill Recreation Centre, 3220 Cedar Hill Rd. Selected ArtWorks artists exhibit with other Saanich artists to kick off the Saanich Open Studio Tour.

Saanich Open Studio Tour

May 2, 1–3pm

Garth Homer Centre

May is the month to visit artists in their home studios and discover incredible treasures. Garth Homer Society ArtWorks artists will be showcasing their talents at the Garth Homer Centre Jennie Butchart Studio and exhibiting their work in the Karin Koerner Gallery.

For more information and studio locations visit www.gobc.ca.

PUBLICATIONS AGREEMENT # 40048799



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