



Outlook

GHS Launches A Personal Care Assistant Pilot Position

Each day, a considerable portion of GHS staff time might be dedicated to supporting clients' personal health care, such as toileting or hygiene, which can interrupt or even eliminate the opportunity for daily program activities.

In particular, the Pathways seniors support program had been affected by clients' increasing needs for staff assistance with personal care; sometimes one staff person was spending up to six hours a day on client personal care. In order to shift more staff time back to programming, Phemie Guttin, Director of Geriatric Services, introduced a pilot personal care assistant position in February of this year. Throughout the fall, staff had been asked to track the amount of time committed to personal care, and, as a result, a full-time staff person was put in place to attend to the personal care needs of all Pathways clients.

From February to March, it was Pathways staff member Roslyn Wagstaff who took on the personal care assistant role and was the go-to person to support clients' personal

care needs. Roslyn would step in to help clients in the washroom without disturbing programming and so helped increase the overall capacity of the Pathways team.

"Everybody benefitted from the pilot program," says Roslyn, who is a residential care attendant and community support worker. "Clients were comfortable since they already knew me and staff could deliver better programming."

With one staff person dedicated to personal care, client needs were addressed more quickly and Roslyn was also able to support other GHS programs as needed. "The pilot position worked much better than we thought it would and the efficiencies were obvious," says Phemie.

Following the success of the pilot program, GHS has now requested funding from Community Living BC to support the personal care assistant position. In the meantime, Roslyn will continue to deliver personal care support on Mondays, a particularly high need care day for GHS clients.



Roslyn Wagner piloted the personal care assistant position with the Pathways program.

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Coming To Terms With Grief And Loss

Earlier this spring, GHS Pathways team coordinator, Cathy Victor, noticed several Pathways clients were more tired than usual, had little motivation to participate in programming and were generally sad. Cathy had known the sudden retirement of a long-time GHS staff person earlier in the year would impact the Pathways program, but she realized the impact on the elderly Pathways clients had been particularly profound and resulted in a strong sense of loss.

“People with developmental disabilities react similarly to loss and grief as the general population,” says Cathy. “But their response is magnified and can lead to behavioural issues.”

People with developmental disabilities may face extensive changes, loss, and grief throughout their lives, from a change in caregivers to moving to new settings or homes, and the loss of personal skills, abilities or friends later in life. As more and more people with developmental disabilities outlive their parents and transition into seniors support programs like Pathways, finding ways to recognize and support clients through loss and change will be increasingly important.

Cathy has researched tools and strategies to support GHS clients in identifying the source of their grief and helping them to come to terms with it. “Once I began to see the common physical, emotional and behavioural indicators, I realized how many of our clients are coping with loss and grief,” says Cathy. “As caregivers, GHS staff play a critical role in helping our clients come to terms with the losses in their lives.”

As part of acknowledging a client’s individual and unique grieving process, Cathy now asks questions about their behaviour and has started to use scrapbooking and storytelling sessions to help Pathways clients name and express their loss.

In June, Cathy will lead public and internal GHS workshops on the role caregivers play in the grieving process for people with developmental disabilities. The workshops will focus on tools to recognize and name grief, offer strategies to help support persons with developmental disabilities through their grieving process and provide helpful resources for continued research. More information on the workshop is available at www.garthhomer.com.

Meet Our Staff – Cathy Victor

Cathy Victor puts her training in counselling and leadership to work every day in her role as Team Coordinator for the GHS Pathways program. Cathy is an ordained minister who honed her listening skills while serving two congregations in Ottawa and as the chaplain at the city’s children’s hospital before moving to Victoria in 2009.

Her experience working with developmental disabilities extends back to her high school years when she volunteered for a school focused on supporting youth with developmental disabilities. Cathy then served as a special education aide with the North Vancouver School District for ten years.

Since joining the Pathways



Cathy Victor in the Pathways garden at the Garth Homer Centre.

team in 2010, Cathy has seen the program expand to serve more clients and offer more activities, including

gardening and a drama club. “Our clients and staff at Garth Homer are so keen on doing a variety of things,” says Cathy. “Each day we’re out in the community or offering creative programming at the centre.” Cathy puts her background in fine arts to work assisting with the knitting, painting and felting programs for Pathways clients.

Cathy’s calm and positive demeanour is welcomed by both staff and clients and she has been instrumental in helping GHS clients cope with grief and loss. “It’s so rewarding getting to know our clients and connecting with them,” says Cathy. “I only see our programming growing as our clients’ needs increase.”

Meet Our Clients – Christy Beattie

Christy Beattie smiles and her eyes light up when you ask about her community volunteer work. “I like to help people,” she says.

Christy, 37, has been a participant at the Garth Homer Centre since 1994 and is known by staff and friends as a helper. Her willingness to help others means she’s a busy lady: four days a week – and sometimes twice a day – Christy volunteers her time with organizations like Selkirk Place Residential Care Home and AIDS Vancouver Island (AVI).

In January 2012, Christy started volunteering with AVI, along with GHS clients Kevin Moss and Chantelle Boudreau. Each Thursday, Christy prepares harm reduction kits for distribution in Victoria. In about an hour and a half, Christy is able to prepare 50 kits that contain equipment to support safer drug use and safer sex

– an important contribution to the AVI Street Outreach Services program.

The AVI offices on Johnson Street in downtown Victoria are busy and lively, with a diversity of people coming in and out every day. It’s this hustle and bustle and chance to interact with other volunteers that Christy enjoys about volunteering in the community.

“It’s fun,” says Christy. “You get to chat with staff and other volunteers.”

AVI Coordinator of Volunteers, Leslie Robinson, recognized the teamwork of Christy, Kevin and Chantelle in spring 2013 by nominating them for a CFA Community Award. “We’re grateful that in addition to contributing their time, the volunteers are reliable, work hard and contribute to a friendly atmosphere,” says Leslie.

It’s clear Christy is enthusiastic and committed to helping others. She



Christy Beattie at AIDS Vancouver Island

also recently received a Certificate of Volunteer Achievement from Selkirk Place, where she helps with seniors exercise programs on Wednesday mornings.

As Erica Day, Christy’s support worker at GHS says, “Helping others puts a smile on Christy’s face.”

CAT Program Reaches \$55,000 Fundraising Goal

Recycling efforts support grassroots projects in Africa

On April 26, the GHS Community Access Team (CAT) awarded positively AFRICA a cheque for \$5,725, raising its total fundraising contribution to the organization to \$55,000. Since 2007, the CAT program has returned refundable bottles and cans in support of the Victoria-based non-profit organization, which funds grassroots projects to improve the lives of people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS in Africa.

Each day, CAT’s 23 program participants collect hundreds of bottles and cans from community partner organizations, then sort and return the items for recycling. Thanks to the CAT program’s support, positively AFRICA has enabled villages in Lesotho and Kenya to purchase items like stoves, water trucks and livestock.

The recycling initiative has been a great success; it offers CAT participants an opportunity to develop organizational and social skills and also offers them an opportunity to give



CAT participants (left to right) Mel, Tawnya, Mai Lin and Taiha, celebrate the program’s fundraising success.

back in an important way to people who need a helping hand in Africa. The CAT program now hopes to raise over \$100,000 for the organization through its continued fundraising efforts.

PROGRAM NEWS

LifeStreams Learning

A new approach to help prepare high school students for adulthood and offer lifelong learning opportunities

Each day, GHS staff look for opportunities to develop their clients' independence and personal growth.

As Employment Services Director, Mary Ann Snowden, explains, "We look for what clients do well and what they need support in." Mary Ann sees more and more GHS clients looking to gain employment experience and she expects referrals for the society's employment services to grow.

Over the last several months, GHS has also explored new ways to recognize individual client abilities and needs among the young adults transitioning out of high school. The pilot GHS high school transition program is helping young adults acquire life skills through offering opportunities for employment experience and social skills development.

"We thought about what types of customized post-secondary learning programs are available to people with developmental disabilities and realized there aren't very many," says CEO, Mitchell Temkin. "There is a need for personalized learning programs that support continued personal growth."

To meet this need, GHS is taking a new approach to education programming that will help maximize learning opportunities for clients, including those transitioning out of high school. In 2013, the Society will launch LifeStreams Learning, a curriculum-based specialized education program that will encompass learning themes such as work skills and behaviour, self-management skills, and community participation skills and

behaviour. GHS clients participating in LifeStreams Learning will follow a tailored learning plan based on their existing skills and identified areas for growth.

LifeStreams Learning will integrate existing GHS programs in employment, volunteer engagement and digital learning into a specialized learning model. Participants will receive services and support based on an assessment of their individual needs, the development of a customized learning plan and progress towards personal learning objectives.

"We'll be able to pick and choose the appropriate learning opportunities – from volunteer experiences to social skills development – that are right for the client at that moment."

The program will contain five elements: assessment, curriculum-based learning, digital learning, experiential learning and internships, and placement at the conclusion of the program. GHS staff will conduct ongoing assessments, provide social skills development, and use the Society's Computer Resource Centre to support digital learning opportunities. Existing GHS community volunteer programs, such as the Community Access Team, will help coordinate volunteer placements and the Employment Services team will provide

job coaching and support for each participant's work experience terms.

GHS has recently received funding from the Victoria Foundation to work with an educational research group to build the client assessment tool, a key element of the LifeStreams Learning model.

"The customized approach to learning and development will allow GHS to tailor the delivery of services to the specific needs of our clients," explains Mitchell. "We'll be able to pick and choose the appropriate learning opportunities – from volunteer experiences to social skills development – that are right for the client at that moment."

GHS clients will be able to progress through the LifeStreams Learning program as they meet their learning objectives and will "graduate" from one learning module to the next. For example, the development of new social skills could help a GHS client start to participate in group activities, while job skills learned through work placement terms could lead to full- or part-time employment opportunities.

"We're always looking for new ways to help our clients succeed," says Mitchell. "The LifeStreams Learning program will be a chance for us to ensure lifelong personal growth and development for GHS clients."



**VICTORIA
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PROGRAM NEWS

GHS Says Goodbye To Marie Harker After 37 Years



Marie Harker (left) on opening day of the Garth Homer Centre in 1977.

In the fall of 1976, Marie Harker took a temporary contract with the Arbutus Crafts Association. Almost 37 years later, in spring 2013, she retired from the Garth Homer Society, which evolved from the Arbutus Crafts Association.

During her time at GHS, Marie embodied the spirit of the organization and its clients. “I was always trying new things,” says Marie. “It’s proven you can continue to learn and develop.” She’s excited to see iPads being used at the centre and other digital learning opportunities. Marie was well known for her artistic

talents (her innumerable posters line the walls of the centre) and was always trying to learn or teach a new craft or knitting stitch.

“I’ve always felt that I got back more than I gave,” says Marie about her time working at GHS.

On Friday, May 3, GHS staff, clients and supporters held a celebration for Marie at the centre. “It was my retirement party,” says Marie, “but it was also a celebration of what the place has been for all those years.” Thanks for being a part of it, Marie – you will be missed!

FUNDRAISING UPDATES

Thank You For Your Support

The Garth Homer Foundation’s spring fundraising campaign tells the story of clients Kim and Shannon, who struggle with the challenges and limitations of their developmental and physical disabilities.

Thanks to the generosity of people like you, and with the support of the Garth Homer Society, Kim and Shannon can be as independent as possible. They also have the opportunity to go out into the community and do the kinds of things young people their age love to do.

It would be easy for us to spend a lot of time inside with Kim and Shannon, playing on the iPad, doing crafts and watching movies. But we know how important it is for people with developmental disabilities to be integrated into the community – despite the challenges, the stigma and the physical barriers. So, each day, we help clients decide where they’d like to go.

We also emphasize independence. Even something like unzipping a jacket or feeding themselves lunch can give a person an immense sense of pride. Because the more a person can do for themselves, the better they feel about themselves. And when other people believe in them, it’s a natural step towards furthering their self-esteem.

Every member of the Garth Homer team believes in the abilities of Kim, Shannon, and our other clients. We think of you as part of our team too. Thank you for believing in the work we do here at the Garth Homer Centre. And thank you for your financial support.



Kim and Shannon at the Garth Homer Centre.

CEO REPORT

Message From The CEO



One of the big challenges in running any organization is to look down the road as far as makes sense, and prepare for changes ahead. Organizations, even small ones, can be as difficult to steer as a runaway barge. Change takes lots of preparation and planning, and even when we can see our destination clearly, getting there can take many years of hard work.

Looking down the road is what the board members of Garth Homer were doing five years ago when they decided the organization needed to research aging and developmental disabilities. Concerned that change was coming whether they wanted it or not, they made the astute decision to try to lead that change and not simply be dragged into it. Because of their foresight, we are well prepared today to provide appropriate and effective services for our older clients.

Sometimes, though, despite all our efforts, change sneaks up on us when we are not looking. We were reminded of this recently when we decided to take a look back at some of our service statistics. What we found was like a sharp poke in the ribs!

A bit of background: Every year, as part of our annual service delivery reporting, we take a look at the primary diagnoses of our clients. Generally, we don't compare those statistics with previous years to see how they might be changing.

But this year, we decided to take a look.

First, we reviewed client profiles for the 2007 service year. We found that about 20% of our clients had a primary diagnosis of Down syndrome, about 5% had a primary diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder – let's just call it autism – and about 56% had no specific diagnosis or were listed as diagnosis unknown.

Then we took a look at the stats for all of our new intakes from 2011 to the end of March 2013. What a change! Over those 27 months, 31% of our new clients had a primary diagnosis of autism, 31% were listed as unknown, and only 11% had a primary diagnosis of Down syndrome.

The reasons for this change are doubtless complex. Part of it may be that more and more disabilities that were previously undiagnosed are now included within the autism spectrum. And part of it is certainly because routine prenatal screening for Down syndrome results in the abortion of fetuses who test positive. As Wikipedia reports in its article on Down syndrome (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Down_syndrome):

“A 2002 literature review of elective abortion rates found that 91–93% of pregnancies in the United Kingdom and Europe with a diagnosis of Down syndrome were terminated. . . . In the United States a number of studies have examined the abortion rate of fetuses with Down syndrome. Three studies estimated the termination rates at 95%, 98%, and 87% respectively.”

Whatever your ethical feelings about this situation, it clearly means that, once again, changes in the general population bring change to Garth Homer. In the past, our single largest group of clients with a known diagnosis was the group with Down syndrome. In the future, it will most certainly be the group with autism.

Exactly what this means for the future of our services remains to be seen. In some small ways we are already responding to the change. For example, we recently qualified as a provider of services under CLBC's Personal Supports Initiative program, which provides outreach to young adults with autism or fetal alcohol syndrome. Over the last couple of months we have started working with our first new clients from this program. And we are starting to think that our LifeStreams Learning project, which aims to provide continuing post-secondary learning for employment and inclusion to young people graduating from special needs programs in high schools, may be especially suited to young adults with autism.

I strongly suspect though, that it will be some time before we truly understand this transition and the changes it will bring to Garth Homer.

Mitchell

FOUNDATION UPDATE

Accommodating Higher Needs

Many of you have already received the latest direct mail package from the Garth Homer Foundation. I hope you found it both interesting and moving. Thank you to all those who have already made a gift, and to those who are planning to make one. As always, continuing support from people who care makes all the difference to the services that GHS offers.

The story in this spring's appeal relates to more than just fundraising. It's a story about Kim and Shannon, two remarkable young women in wheelchairs — friends, in fact — who recently came to the Garth Homer Society to join the Dreams program.

Kim and Shannon are hugely spirited young persons with very significant impairments. As higher-needs participants, they are shaping the future of GHS, and represent two converging trends indicating that more of our new clients will be arriving with higher needs.

First, continuing fiscal restraint in government means that in the future, only the highest needs clients will get full funding for participation in day services. And second, more and more families of young people with less severe impairments are looking for employment and community-based inclusion activities to replace traditional day supports.



Leah and Ari Kinarthy donated a lift-equipped van to GHS in May 2013. Thank you!

Together, these trends show us that our facility needs to be ready to accommodate a greater proportion of higher needs clients in the future. This consideration is central to our plans for upcoming renovations to the Garth Homer Centre. We need to take into account the need for program spaces large enough to accommodate numerous big wheelchairs and other mobility devices; wider hallways in some parts of the facility; an increased number of accessible bathrooms; and specialized equipment such as lifts.

We also need to think about transportation, and acquiring more vans with lifts for wheelchairs. Speaking of vans, thank you to Leah and Ari Kinarthy for their recent wonderful gift of a lift-equipped van to GHS.

The point is, we don't just take on a difficult project like the renovation of the facility for its own sake. Everything we plan and do is rooted in the needs of those we serve. And as those needs change, so must we.

Have a great summer everybody.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, which appears to read "Audrey Stott".

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



ANNOUNCEMENTS & EVENTS

WORKSHOP ON GRIEF AND LOSS

A free workshop on grief and loss for families, caregivers and professionals.

June 18, 2013

6:30 – 8pm

Garth Homer Centre

GARTH HOMER SOCIETY ARTWORKS EVENTS

Disabled Art @ The Edge Showcase

May 23 – June 9

Fifty Fifty Arts Collective

2516 Douglas St.

ArtWorks Artists, Ashley Haagensen, Cara Johnson and Tanya Steinhausen will be representing the ArtWorks program in the Disabled Art @ The Edge Showcase presented by the Canadian Disability Studies Association.

David Whiting Solo Exhibition

June 20 – July 5

Opening June 20 6:30 – 8:30pm

Karin Koerner Gallery

Garth Homer Centre

ArtWorks Summer Exhibition

July 8 – August 30

Karin Koerner Gallery

Garth Homer Centre

TD Art Gallery Paint-In

Saturday, July 20

Moss St.

Greg Robertson Solo Exhibition

Bridges and Bears

Opening reception September 26, 1 – 3 pm

Emily Carr House

207 Government St.



PUBLICATIONS AGREEMENT # 40048799

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