



Outlook

Community Access Team Open House



On Thursday, October 11, the Community Access Team (CAT) rooms in the Garth Homer Centre were abuzz with the program's Open House.

CAT clients volunteer at organizations throughout the community and used the afternoon event to showcase their volunteer work. CAT supports 23 clients in more than 25 volunteer positions at non-profit agencies, day cares and seniors' facilities across Greater Victoria.

"It was a great opportunity to explain to people about Swan Lake and Wild A.R.C. Some people don't know about these places and they are awesome places doing good things," said CAT client Lynne Hibak.

This was the program's first Open House and was facilitated by CAT clients with minimal support from program staff. Clients used photo displays, video clips

and presentations to bring their volunteer experiences to life. Several agencies that host CAT volunteers attended the event, including two members of the Saanich Police Department and residents from Glenwarren Lodge.

"Some people told me afterward that they liked how it was simple. They could look at the displays then ask questions right then," said CAT client Laurie Fairweather. "It was very personal and I felt my confidence grow. It was great."

CAT Program Coordinator Kevin Steeple hoped the event would provide an honest reflection of the diversity of a regular day for the clients in the Community Access Team. Most CAT clients spend five days a week out in the community volunteering.

Community organizations interested in CAT volunteers can contact Kevin Steeple at ksteeple@garthhomersociety.org.

GHS client Tawyna speaks about the Community Access Team's work to raise funds through refundable recycling programs for positively Africa, an organization that helps AIDS ravaged villages in Africa.

- 02** MESSAGE FROM CHAIR
- 03** ARTWORKS HOLIDAY CARDS
- 04** EMPLOYMENT SERVICES
- 06** GARTH HOMER FOUNDATION
- 07** CEO REPORT
- 08** UPCOMING EVENTS

Message from the Chair

In many families, as we approach the holiday season and a bright new year to come, it is a natural time for reflection, a time to think a little about where have been in the past year and about what might lie ahead.



This is as true in the Garth Homer Society family as it is in yours or mine. The past year has been a remarkably busy and positive one for GHS. Personally, I see it as a year in which we laid new foundations for the many challenges ahead, a year in which we have started to really come to grips with the significant changes affecting the community living sector.

First, and perhaps most importantly, we have begun to adapt our programs to the rapidly changing needs of people with developmental disabilities and their families. With the hiring of our new Director of Geriatric Services, we have expanded our capacity for the delivery of much needed programs to a whole new generation of older clients, particularly those with dementia. In addition, we have made our social life skills programs more accessible to younger people with higher needs and behavioural challenges, and we have begun to build a rigorous new individual assessment process into our employment services to help us do a better job of finding meaningful, relevant work for those who want it.

Second, we have moved rapidly to improve our financial sustainability. In the past year we greatly expanded our capacity to raise funds in the community, and particularly to engage the support of community funders like the United Way, Victoria Foundation, Telus Community Board, Coast Capital, and Community Gaming Grants. We are grateful to all of them for their recent contributions, without which much of what we have done on the past year would not have been possible. Over the year we also worked closely with the Garth Homer Foundation in its renewal of its individual fundraising and direct mail campaigns. We thank the Foundation for its support for new initiatives in the Society, and we thank all of you who continue to support the Foundation with your gifts.

Third, we have begun to once again raise the profile of GHS in the community. GHS has deep roots in Victoria, with a rich history and connections to many individuals, families, and organizations. It is imperative that we continue to nourish these roots. To begin to do so, we have redesigned our newsletter, the third new issue of which you are now reading, and have begun the rework of our website and online presence. In addition, our senior staff has put considerable effort into community engagement and outreach.

And finally, again working with the Garth Homer Foundation, and starting with an initial consulting study, we have begun the process of re-developing the Garth Homer Centre to meet the needs of the future. The coming year should see some exciting new plans emerge from this work.

As you can see it has been a busy year, a year of many changes and new initiatives. Of course, none of this happens on its own. Most of all this holiday season, I would like to thank the Garth Homer Society Board members, staff, and management, whose focus, dedication, and effort over the past year have been exemplary.

Bruce Homer

Bruce Homer

Order GHS Holiday cards today!

Celebrate the holiday season with cards by GHS ArtWorks artists.



Sets of four cards are available for \$15, with proceeds supporting the GHS and the artists.

The four holiday cards feature original works by ArtWorks artists, Ashley Haagensen, Gregory Robertson, Tanya Steinhausen and Philip Davis.

“It’s awesome,” says Ashley. “People who buy the cards will get to see our work and who we are.”

Since 1998, the ArtWorks program has mentored GHS clients to develop their artistic talents and showcase their artwork in the community.

You might recall our Christmas cracker sales from years past. This year’s holiday card sales continue the GHS tradition of selling Christmas gifts to benefit the Society, as well as highlighting our clients’ talents.

Cards can be ordered online at www.ghscardsonline.com, or by phone at 250-475-2270

PROGRAM NEWS

Finding the right person for the right job

Modern workplaces are evolving and so are GHS's employment services. GHS has operated Employment Services for over 17 years. Currently, more than 70 clients work with job coaches to support them in job placements and work experience.

Over the last year, new Employment Services staff have helped to identify opportunities to improve GHS' job placement process. GHS job coaches have always worked to match clients with suitable positions and organizations, but the Society is now placing a renewed emphasis on the client assessment process. "We're constantly pushing ourselves to learn more about our clients' skills and talents," says Mary Ann Snowden, Quality Assurance Director at the Society.

"We want to make sure we're asking the right questions to determine the best employment site for an individual."

The Employment Services team recently worked with Debbie Provencher, a former rehabilitation professional and currently a customized employment specialist, to boost their client assessment skills and ability to negotiate tailored positions with employers. Team members are honing their job development skills to

help them look past traditional job descriptions to find customized employment opportunities for the Society's clients.

Successful job placements are about more than just a paid position. When a job placement truly reflects a client's skills and interests, the experience is more satisfying for both the client and the employer. An enhanced focus on client assessment and targeting employers to develop customized positions will help create more durable and lasting job placements. Demand for customized employment opportunities is growing amongst GHS clients and now, more than ever, GHS is working to find the right person for the right job.

GHS client a valued Coast Capital employee



Jenny MacKay working at Coast Capital Credit Union.

Every Monday Jenny Mackay sorts mail at Coast Capital Credit Union's head offices in Victoria. Over her two-hour shift, the 21-year-old receives incoming mail, processes outgoing envelopes and delivers mail to staff throughout the building.

"It's fun to scan and sort the mail," says Jenny. "And, I really like my boss, Ann."

GHS coordinated a work experience term for Jenny at the credit union in 2011. Thanks to mentorship from Coast Capital staff like Ann Cooney, Jenny has blossomed in her role and become a valued member of the credit union's team. She will transition to a paid job placement as of December 1, 2012 and will be the first person with developmental disabilities employed by Coast Capital. In addition to supporting this new GHS job placement, Coast Capital has been a key sponsor of the Society's strategic planning process and has provided funds in support of the Oak Bay High

School pilot project in student employment.

"It's a win-win situation," says Ann. "We all look forward to seeing Jenny every Monday and it's great to see her excel in the position."

Jenny started at Coast Capital with little on-the-job experience, but has developed a strong set of mail-sorting and customer service skills. She's confident using the mail-sorting machine and always enjoys interacting with staff on her morning mail run. She'll catch Ann if she makes a mistake processing incoming mail and continues to impress Coast Capital staff with her strong memory and ability to take on new challenges.

"I love my position," says Jenny. Her mother does too. Karen Mackay has seen her daughter become more independent since she started with Coast Capital.

"She's treated with respect and proud of her work," says Karen. Jenny has gained her independence and Coast Capital has a valued employee.



Pathways opens new quiet room

Poke your head into the new quiet room at the Garth Homer Centre and you'll find comfortable recliners, music headsets and at least a client or two.

The quiet room is a space for GHS clients who are feeling stressed to get settled in a calm, safe place. Clients can head to the room when they are feeling anxious or agitated, or just need a place to rest away from the hustle and bustle of the Centre.

Most clients are able to use the room without supervision, which allows staff to carry on client programming without disrupting a larger group.

Thanks to funding in part from the United Way, the room is equipped with soft lighting, comfy furniture and relaxing music. The quiet room was built as a part of the Pathways program, our service for people in later life, and especially those who are showing signs of dementia, but all clients

in the Centre are encouraged to use the space. Its development was a key task in our expansion of geriatric services.

Phemie Guttin, Director of Geriatric Services, has extensive experience in the use of quiet rooms from her former role as a manager of retirement communities. She helped to design the new GHS quiet room and is working with staff to track its effectiveness. "It seems to de-escalate clients almost immediately and has a lingering effect for a

brief period after they leave the room," says Phemie. The room has been in constant use since renovations were completed in September. Next time you're in the Centre, stop by to check out the quiet room, located between Pearls and Pals.



Thanks to the input from GHS clients and staff, the quiet room features stuffed animals, calming music CDs and DVDs.

Garth Homer Foundation Report



Fall is always a busy time at the Garth Homer Foundation, and these past few months have been no different.

We are very pleased to announce that the Foundation will provide a matching grant for whatever is raised by staff in the first ever United Way of Greater Victoria workplace campaign at GHS. The United Way's level of support for GHS last year was truly remarkable, so it is only right that we all

work together to contribute to their great community campaign, to give something back. When we heard that staff had launched a series of fundraising events through the fall, we knew instantly that Foundation had to step up to help.

Over the fall we have also been starting to get some of the first feedback from our purchase of 14 iPads for use by clients in GHS programs, with funding from the Butchart Gardens Wishing Pond Fund. The Fund is designated for investments in technology for clients at GHS, and the purchase of the iPads last summer was its first big initiative. So far, the news has been great, and we've heard terrific reports of the tablets being used for things like memory maintenance, anxiety management, and literacy learning, as well as all the fun stuff like listening to music, playing games, or watching movies.

We are continuing to work closely with GHS in finding ways to adapt the Garth Homer Centre to the changing needs of clients. In the coming years, we expect that GHS will begin to serve more high-needs and older clients, many of whom will be users of walkers or wheelchairs. It will be essential for these clients that doors in the Centre be automated to allow maximum mobility and accessibility.

Right now, only some of the centre's doors are automated. Working with management staff at GHS, we have completed a proposal to the disabilities office of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada for funding to complete the installation of openers on all the doors in the Centre. We should hear if we are successful early in the new year.

And as of this writing, we are just completing a proposal to the Community Infrastructure Fund of Western Economic Diversification Canada for funding to complete the urgently needed replacement of the Centre roof. Last year we raised some of the funding needed in a mail campaign, but roofing is expensive and we need to find a little more. If the proposal is successful, the repairs will be completed next spring. For both of the above projects, GHF will provide a share of the needed resources.

Finally, I'd like to thank all of you who supported our fundraising campaigns over the last year. The current Christmas campaign is all about courage and hope. Through your gift to the Garth Homer Foundation you are helping to support the courage and hope of all the individuals we are helping to make a better life for themselves. Every contribution helps more than you can possibly imagine.

Happy holidays everyone!

Judith Scott
Chair, Garth Homer Foundation

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

CEO Report – On the Road for the United Way



One thing I've been busy with this past fall is going out to the launch of workplace campaigns for the United Way as a Community Partner Speaker, helping to get the word out by telling folks a little about how United Way funding has made an impact at the Garth Homer Society.

What I have ended up talking about is how life expectancy for people with developmental disabilities has improved so dramatically in recent history. Not many people are aware of it, but back in the 1920's, the life expectancy of a child born with Down Syndrome was nine years.

Yes...you read that correctly, nine years! It was a tragedy in the making for every family of a child with Down Syndrome. And the life expectancy of people living with other developmental and cognitive disabilities was not much better.

Today, all that has changed. Since the Second World War, people with developmental disabilities have moved out of the institutions in which they were once warehoused and hidden, kept out of sight and isolated, and into community care.

With inclusion and acceptance, life span has increased. Today, people with Down Syndrome can expect to live to their mid-fifties, and those with less severe disabilities have life expectancies approaching that of the general population.

To my mind, there is no greater testament to the power of community than the benefit that community inclusion has brought to people with developmental disabilities.

However, this has started to create problems of its own because, for the very first time in human history, most children with developmental disabilities can expect to survive their parents, and organizations that support them, like the Garth Homer Society, need to learn to provide appropriate services to meet the needs of older adults.

However, as is almost always the case, the real struggles are for families. I was recently speaking with the 75-year-old father of one of our clients. His son has been with Garth Homer for many years. Now in his forties, he is beginning to show early signs of geriatric decline.

What the father said to me was heartbreaking. He said, "It's awful, but I have to hope that my son goes before me. Because who will care for him when I am gone?"

In the 1920s, a life expectancy of nine years was a tragedy, though perhaps unavoidable at the time. But it is simply inexcusable that today, after all that has been achieved, a full life span should turn out to be a tragedy as well.

Funding from the United Way is helping us build programs for older clients. All our clients should be able to continue to live active, fulfilling and inclusive lives well into later life, whatever age that may be.

One of the United Way's great campaign goals is for healthy people in strong communities. Their funding is helping to ensure that parents of children with developmental disabilities can be confident that there is support for their children no matter what their age. If that does not contribute to healthy people in strong communities, then I don't know what does.

Have a great holiday season everyone.

Mitchell

UVic study explores impact of work on GHS clients

How does employment affect personal physical activity levels, particularly amongst people with developmental disabilities?

This fall, University of Victoria researcher Dr. Vivienne Temple, is working with GHS

Employment Services to explore the impact of work on physical activity levels of GHS clients. Dr. Temple is a Professor in the University's School of Exercise Science, Physical and Health Education and has over 20 years experience researching physi-

cal activity of individuals with developmental disabilities.

Dr. Temple's past research projects have identified work as a motivating factor for physical activity among people with devel-

opmental disabilities. This is particularly important for GHS clients, as research shows that people with developmental disabilities have low physical fitness levels. She now hopes to establish the contribution of regular employment to lifestyle physical activity.

"We're familiar with the financial and social benefits of work and its impact on building self-esteem with people with developmental disabilities," says Dr. Temple. "We hope this research project will add another piece to the discussion and show the physical activity benefits of work."

All interested employment services clients will be able to join the study and invited to participate in the research project later this fall. Project findings will help support organizations like GHS better understand the wide range of benefits employment services programs offer.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND EVENTS

CATCH CAT ON YOUTUBE!

A piece highlighting the work of Community Access Team participants for Parks Canada at Fort Rodd Hill recently aired on Shaw TV. If you missed it you can catch it on YouTube at http://youtu.be/eG_tkLQY0-U.

QUALITY ASSURANCE WORKSHOP

GHS will be hosting a day-long practitioner workshop on quality assurance on November 28. The workshop will focus on the integration of quality assurance and business planning. For more information, please contact Mary Ann Snowden at 250-475-2220 or masnowden@garthomersociety.org.

GHS ARTWORKS EVENTS

November 1 to 30

"Finding Frida"

Karin Koerner Gallery, 813 Darwin Avenue

A two-person exhibition on the theme of Frida Kahlo, by Josefina Mena and Philip Davis

November 22 to December 21

Group Exhibition at Carole James' Constituency Office

1084 Fort Street

ArtWorks annual group exhibition

December 1 to 22

GHS Artworks Holiday Group Exhibition

Martin Batchelor Gallery, 712 Cormorant Street

Opening December 1st, 1:00-3:00pm

Throughout December

ArtWorks Christmas Blowout Sale

Karin Koerner Gallery, 813 Darwin Avenue



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