

The Citizen

Connecting people with their community



COMMUNITY LIVING
BRITISH COLUMBIA



Connecting with Self-Advocates

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Members of CLBC's Board of Directors met with six Self-Advocates to learn about their challenges and successes.

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Rick Mowles, CEO

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WELCOME TO THE FIRST EDITION OF THE CITIZEN FOR 2011.

In this issue we are featuring some of the key CLBC initiatives that are helping to build “good lives in welcoming communities” - the first anniversary of the Personalized Supports Initiative (PSI), the launch of the third annual WOW!clbc Awards, and employment advancements creating more opportunities for adults with developmental disabilities to find “real work for real pay”.

February 1, 2011 marks the first full year that applications have been accepted for North America’s first support program specifically designed for adults diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder or Autism Spectrum Disorder and significant challenges in daily living. The Honourable Kevin Krueger, Minister of Social Development, has written an article to celebrate the first anniversary of this groundbreaking initiative.

On January 31, we launched the third annual WOW!clbc Award nominations. These awards acknowledge the important contributions of all of CLBC’s partners in building and fostering community inclusion and full citizenship for adults with developmental disabilities. Nominations are accepted in four categories: Family Member, Community Partner, Service Provider and Self-Advocate. This year, we encourage you to let your community know about this important opportunity to recognize and celebrate inclusion.

Meaningful employment is a big part of inclusion. Our jobs provide us with social opportunities, a chance to build our skills, abilities and self-esteem, and increase our independence. CLBC partners with service providers, families, individuals, businesses and the Ministry of Social Development to promote and support inclusive employment. In this edition, we introduce a new column, “You asked us”, which features knowledgeable staff answering common questions about CLBC initiatives. This month, we will be answering questions about inclusive employment and introducing a new employment resource for service providers, staff and Community Councils.

One of our first priorities is finding new ways to connect individuals and families to their communities. We are committed to looking at new ideas and continuing to build on the work of families, individuals and community partners. We hope you enjoy reading about the milestones reached and the new goals set in this edition, and we look forward to working with you throughout the next year as we move forward in our shared vision of more inclusive communities. ■

Knowing what's best for me

By Karen Assels



Karen Assels knows the importance of saying how she feels.

Hi! My name is Karen

Assels and I live in Abbotsford. I live in my own suite in a house I share with my parents. I have an older brother who lives in Mission with his own family.

I work at Community Living British Columbia in Abbotsford as an administration assistant. I love my job and my co-workers. Recently, I gave a presentation about what working means to me at a meeting called "Employment Initiative: Dialogue with Agencies". My boss Jai came to me and asked if I would speak to the group. I was so nervous at the beginning because I am more of a "sit in the background" person, but I discovered that I love to present.

I am a member of the Abbotsford Self-Advocate Group. We work on projects and meet every month. Our advisor is Arlene Schouten and she rocks! I support Arlene by taking notes. I am the secretary of the group.

When I was 15 I found out I have Autism. That was when I started to understand why high school was so hard for me. I was bullied and people kept telling me just ignore

them but I couldn't. Those were some hard years.

I am very good at figuring out how to cope with things that cause me stress. For example, I have a hard time in noisy places. When I am getting overwhelmed with noises, it really helps to put my ear buds in and listen to music. A big challenge for me is people who don't understand that I do that to deal with the noises that bother me. They think I am ignoring them and want me to take the ear buds out. They just don't understand and that is hard sometimes. I want people to know that sometimes a person is just trying to cope, that is an important message. I really know myself and can say how I feel and what I need to be ok. I know myself best.

Some of the other things I do to cope are deep breathing, text or make phone calls if I am scared of something, and surround myself with friends who support me.

Our self-advocate group got a Self-Advocates Seeding Innovation (SASI) grant from the British Columbia Association for Community Living this year. We had so much fun

creating skits about three kinds of advocacy. I played a character named Blanche who was modelled after the character in the TV show "Golden Girls". We had a blast doing the skits.

Every October I go to the Self-Advocate Retreat at Edenvale. Believe me, something has to be good if I miss being on my computer for a whole weekend. The retreat is that good and it is worth it! ■

Inside Voice is published in each issue of *The Citizen*. If you are interested in writing for this column, please call Chris Rae at 1-877-660-2522, or email editor@communitylivingbc.ca

Looking forward

By Hon. Kevin Krueger, Minister of Social Development

I'M VERY PLEASED TO HAVE BEEN APPOINTED MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR

Community Living BC (CLBC). As the crown agency responsible for providing supports and services to adults with developmental disabilities in British Columbia and their families, CLBC has achieved much in its five years of supporting eligible adults to live independent and productive lives in their communities.

As the MLA for Kamloops-South Thompson, and especially since being appointed Minister of Social Development last October, I have had the opportunity to meet with people involved in community living. I look forward to learning more about the many accomplishments of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families, and to sharing these stories with the public.

I think it's important to make all British Columbians more aware of the supports and services provided through CLBC and especially to emphasize the many contributions that individuals supported by CLBC make to our communities and to our province.

More and more individuals with developmental disabilities are seeking opportunities to work in meaningful jobs for real pay. I want our Ministry of Social Development to support this goal by enhancing customized employment services for people with developmental disabilities.

To those of you who are getting involved as employees, volunteers, or both, I want to thank you for your efforts not only as contributors to B.C.'s economy and well-being, but for showing others how it's done.

This month we mark the one-year anniversary of CLBC's Personalized Supports Initiative (PSI) which is providing a new group of adults with individualized support and services through CLBC. British Columbia is the first place in North America to provide such services to individuals with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum or Autism Spectrum (also known as Pervasive Developmental Disorder). We're working with our colleagues in other ministries on the next steps for this program as it grows.

Government recognizes the importance of providing services for every eligible adult to meet their disability-related needs. I recently had the opportunity to speak with service providers from the BC CEO Network and I am impressed by the collaborative relationship with CLBC on the delivery of services to the individuals you support. Together with self-advocates and families, you are all contributing to a better life for individuals with developmental disabilities.

I look forward to working with all of you – self-advocates, families, service providers and the many other people who contribute to building inclusive communities in our province. The future holds the promise of new ways of doing things that will improve the lives of the people we serve. I am confident that we will continue to find new ways of supporting individuals and families to achieve their goals and participate fully in the community. ■



Minister Kevin Krueger answers questions from the BC CEO Network.



Minister Krueger with the BC CEO Network Leadership.

New connections to community

IT'S CLEAR FROM THE WAY WILLIAM WALKER TEACHES and plays his favourite card game, Magic the Gathering, that he is a kind, generous and empathetic person. The challenge for William is feeling comfortable connecting with others socially, which impacts his life on all levels. It's one reason why his family applied to CLBC in 2010 to get support through the Personalized Supports Initiative (PSI).

His application was accepted in October 2010, and by November 8, William was working with a support worker from South Island Community Connections, James Cowan. Prior to working with James, William spent his days isolated and alone in his room. Working together, James and William have established goals for exercise, connecting with community resources, building life skills, like cooking and cleaning, and finding ways to celebrate William's abilities while building towards his goal of a broader social network.

"Everyone has a different cognitive style, and my job is to help William connect with others in a way that celebrates his unique cognitive ability," says James. "William has so many skills on which to build."

Through the PSI and based on his CLBC plan, William has become a regular at one of the comic and game shops in downtown Victoria, where staff are getting to know him and where he can play cards with others who share his interests. He is taking his first steps towards employment by connecting with Transition Youth Employment Services (TYES) to start assessing his skills and to help him prepare for employment. He is also working on learning how to make healthier lifestyle choices, and becoming more self-sufficient.

"I'm interested in working with computers, and creating and designing games," says William. "That would be my ultimate job."

William's family is pleased with the progress seen in the three months he has been involved with PSI, and with the trust and working relationship that's been established with James. As with many families, one of their main concerns has been making sure William has enough skills to live more independently when they are gone.

"William has had some real challenges coming out of high school, and not knowing how to take his next steps into the world," says his father Mark. "We're seeing progress already through the PSI. He now comes and participates socially with the family and with friends."

"We are really pleased with the progress William has made," says his mother Trish. "We want him to be independent but we also want him to be happy, and to have relationships that make him happy."

Trish and Mark also feel it's important that schools and doctors have a greater awareness and knowledge about Autism so children and youth get appropriate support early in their development (William was not diagnosed until he was a teenager). PSI is helping reach this goal by facilitating partnerships with school districts, health authorities and other community partners.

For more information on the Personalized Supports Initiative, please visit www.communitylivingbc.ca and go to Individuals & Families > Personalized Supports Initiative, or contact your local CLBC office.

To connect with South Island Community Connections through the Sooke Family Resource Society, please visit www.sfrs.ca ■

William Walker with his parents Trish and Mark.



Networking through art

ON JANUARY 7, FAMILIES AND friends joined community members and City of Quesnel staff to launch the first gallery showing of artworks created by participants of the Absolute Art program. The works include pottery, prints, fabric art and paintings. The show is open until the end of January.

“This is the first group showing from the Absolute Art program, and shows a selection of works from throughout the year,” says Elizabeth Waldorf, the Arts Program Coordinator for Quesnel. “The people involved are proud of their work and the opportunity to share it with the community.”

Absolute Art pairs local artists with people with developmental disabilities. The artists share their skills and techniques with participants, and help them explore up to two mediums per class. Currently, six artists lead the once-a-month sessions with up to 34 self-advocates. The artists include: Pat Wahlstrom, pottery; Darleen Hendry, watercolours and mixed media; Ellen Facey, watercolours; Marilyn Rollo & Connie Pomeroy, fabric art/quilting; and Sybille Muschik, printmaking. The mediums explored in the class reflect the interests of the self-advocates involved.

Absolute Art is fully funded by the City of Quesnel. The program was started in 2008, with the founding premise that “everyone has an artist within.” After visiting an art program in another community, Carol Price, a resource teacher at a local secondary school, developed the program along with colleagues from the Quesnel Community Living Association (QCLA), Colleen Hackler, and the Quesnel Arts and Recreation Centre,

Maggie Ferguson-Dumais, the Arts Coordinator.

“When we started the program, we talked about art as a means to network with peers, and to integrate talented and interested artists with disabilities with art classes they could attend regularly,” says Colleen.

“Participants love the program, and it’s opened up the perceptions of the instructing artists who really enjoy the work and have developed relationships with their students.”

As the Arts Program Coordinator, Elizabeth chairs meetings, organizes the local artists, purchases supplies, as well as organizing the Art displays and the gallery opening. QCLA, Prima Enterprises, the School District and North Cariboo Christian School are all involved in bringing self-advocates to the classes. Staff, caregivers and families members also provide support. It is truly a community effort.

“The program could not function without the assistance of caregivers and the workers from the involved agencies. They are at the table supporting both instructor and learners whether it be pottery or painting or another medium,” says Ellen Facey, one of the artists.

Currently, Colleen and Elizabeth are working with Ellen, Carol, and Maggie to develop an 18-month calendar using the participants’ art work, which could be sold at the local Farmer’s Market over the summer. Future plans may also include expanding the program to include a senior’s group, having another gallery showing, and perhaps selling artists’ works to the public.

“We are exploring the possibility of having pieces for sale, and also creating posters or t-shirts of the different pieces. All proceeds could go back to the program,” says Elizabeth. “It would be an exciting next step.”

You can view works from the Absolute Art Show by visiting www.qcla.ca ■



One of the many pieces on display at the Absolute Arts gallery show.

Part of the family

EVERY HOLIDAY SEASON,

Karen looks forward to her work as part of the Salvation Army's annual kettle drive. Six days a week, she's out in her community of ringing her bell, engaging the public and accepting donations.

"She does a fabulous job," says Cheryl-Anne Hendy, Karen's friend and home sharing provider for the past 12 years. "She has a million kilowatt smile and people just love her and respond to her."

Cheryl-Anne was a manager of home sharing in Delta at a time when Karen was looking for a new living situation. "I got to know her really well and became friends. My husband and family got to know her and wanted her to move in."

Cheryl-Anne's children have since left home and have families of their own but visit regularly. Her grandchildren always look forward to seeing Auntie Karen.

"It has been great for our kids to grow up with Karen and when they come home they're still very close," says Cheryl-Anne.

Karen gets along well with the three dogs, Emma, Sidney and William and even got her own cat, Jamie. All of the neighbours recently came over to celebrate Karen's 60th birthday party.

"Cheryl Anne treats me like a sister and I treat her like a sister," says Karen. "I enjoy my life with her and her family." ■



Karen takes part in the Salvation Army's annual kettle drive.

A community treasure

By Greta Cooper, Team Assistant, Vernon Community Living Centre

COUNTING OUT EXACT CHANGE,

Jessica Debruin smiles and hands it to the customer as Sharron Hooper bags the purchase. Another sale for Venture Treasures thrift store helps contribute to special events and field trips for the Vernon & District Association for Community Living (VDACL).

The store came about in June 2010 when community support worker Chelline Harms was helping to organize a garage sale fundraising event. Inspired by the idea of a thrift store, word spread and Eileen Howells, Executive Director for VDACL helped to coordinate the use of a bright boutique-like space next to the recycling depot.

Current scheduling is based on staff volunteers and individuals who really like to help with money, bagging, packing up stuff, sorting, and meeting and greeting customers. The store is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday and attracts some regular customers. There is also a community advertising board and people will phone the store to make sure they have room before donating any large items.

Harms says the community has been generous with their donations. "It's worked out great and it's a perfect location," she says.

Anyone interested in donating or volunteering at the Venture Treasure Thrift Store can call 250-542-2374. ■

(left to right) Jon Mansell of Community Connections, Chelline Harms, Sharron Hooper and Jessica Debruin.



Connecting with Self-Advocates

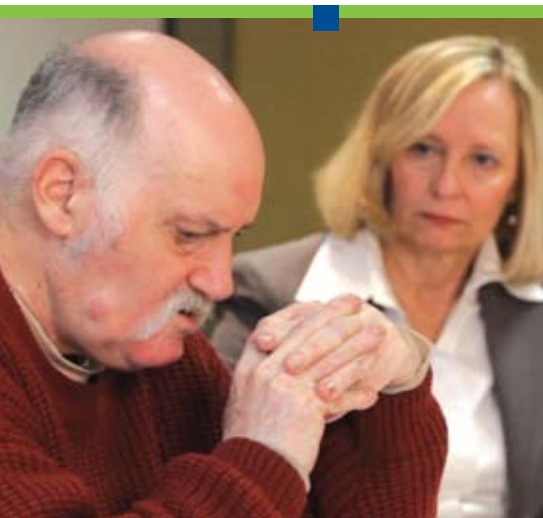
ON TUESDAY, JANUARY 25, MEMBERS OF CLBC'S BOARD of Directors met with six self-advocates to hear their stories and learn about their challenges, concerns and successes.

"We really want to hear your perspectives on what you do, why you advocate, what you strive to achieve, what your challenges are. We're here to listen and learn from you to help us do our job better," said CLBC Board Chair Denise Turner, who was joined by Board Committee Chairs Ken Crump, Norah Flaherty and Jan Marston.

In attendance were Richard McDonald, Tricia Lins, Ryan Groth, Dave and Lori Sherritt, and Barb Goode. Each of the self-advocates was given time to speak to the board about their experiences and share important information. The meeting was also attended by Shelley Nessman, CLBC's Self-Advocate Advisor, and Carol Goozh, Vice-President of Policy and Program Development for CLBC.

Richard began by talking about his experience of living in Woodlands and Tranquille, and his work promoting deinstitutionalization. He shared information about the "We Survived Woodlands" group. Richard was active in the development of the Woodlands Memorial Gardens and invited board members to visit the gardens.

Richard is very involved with the Community Living Radio Show, which airs on CFRO 102.7 FM Coop Radio every Friday from 2pm to 3pm. He is also working as an interviewer of self-advocates across BC through CLBC's Quality of Life project.



Richard McDonald talks about his experiences with Jan Marston and other members of the CLBC Board.

"I appreciate everything and I'm glad to tell you my story," said Richard. "I like what I'm doing right now and I just want to keep things up."

Tricia recently moved from 100 Mile House to Langley and works in CLBC's Langley office. She told the board about her experience of moving for love and some of the challenges and benefits of moving from a small community to a larger one.

"The best thing is, if you needed help, people were there to help you because it was such a small town. The challenges with moving to a new town, were meeting new people. That was the hardest thing," said Tricia.

She shared some advice for other self-advocates who might be considering a similar move, "Go and see if you like it first. Get some safety nets going. Safety comes first before everything. If you like it and want to move, talk it over with people. They're there to support you."

Before moving to Langley, Tricia worked as a Self-Advocate Project Assistant in CLBC's 100 Mile House office. In this role she helped to organize a conference for self-advocates in the Interior. At the conference, she presented a workshop to a group of 42 people, an experience that helped her overcome her shyness. She hopes to help other self-advocates to build their confidence when speaking in front of others. In her new job, she is continuing this work and is currently helping to plan a daylong conference for self-advocates in March.

Ryan recently moved from his family home and now lives independently in Vancouver. He talked about his new living situation, "It's big to live your life the way you want to," he said.

Ryan is helping other self-advocates to create their own person-centred plans through a work cooperative called ESATTA (Empowering Self-Advocates to Take Action), which he also helped to found. He sits on the Richmond Community Council and the Provincial Advisory Committee to the CLBC Board, and talked about the value of participation, "It allows me to have an influence on what's happening in the community."



Dave Sherritt tells CLBC Board Chair Denise Turner and other CLBC Board members about getting married and the importance of inclusive employment.

Dave and Lori have been married for 26 years. They talked about the process they went through to get married and many of the challenges they had to overcome along the way.

Dave also talked about employment, sharing some of his past experiences and hopes for the future, “I’d like to see people working for full wages, and full time. I hope eventually one day, everyone will be able to work. It gives you the dignity to know that you’re worth something. It gives you the chance to prove that you are a value to society.”

Lori talked about work she is currently undertaking to re-establish BC People First, and the importance of self-advocates being able to speak up and represent themselves.

“It’s rewarding work. You have to keep learning. You’ve got a voice, you can use it. You’re not going to sit quiet all the time. You’ve got to get out there and speak up,” said Lori.

Dave and Lori also work with Richard to produce the Community Living Radio Show each week.

Barb is an experienced self-advocate who has played a key role on the local, provincial, national and international stage. “I’ve been involved for a long time, and seen a lot of change over the years,” she said.

Self-advocates share their challenges and successes during the meeting with members of the CLBC Board.

Barb was the first self-advocate testifying in front of the Supreme Court of Canada and is a passionate spokesperson for the rights of all people, “One of the things that is important to me is plain language, and that’s helping people understand things that are complicated.”

Barb talked about the importance of recognizing that people communicate in many different ways. “We have to understand the challenges of people who don’t necessarily use their voice,” she said.

This session was important since it provided an opportunity for self-advocates to connect with board members. Everyone agreed that dialogue with the self-advocate community around the province was necessary to gain a better understanding of what is important in the lives of self-advocates.

Denise summarized the important lessons of the day. “I learned that none of us can learn if we don’t listen, and that there’s an art to listening. You can’t assume anything. Not all communication comes in a single form. We have to be open minded in how we listen because not everyone communicates the same way. We shouldn’t presume that we know what’s best for people, that we know what people want in life or what they want to achieve,” said Denise.

“We have to have open ears and open eyes and really the biggest thing is an open mind.”

If you’re interested in learning more about this meeting, video clips of each of the self-advocates will soon be appearing on the CLBC website under What’s New > Media Room and will be shared through CLBC’s Facebook and Twitter pages. ■



Dr. Michael Kendrick discusses Safeguards

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN INVOLVED IN THE COMMUNITY LIVING MOVEMENT AND WHAT GOT YOU INVOLVED IN SAFEGUARDS?

I have been involved in the community living movement for about 40 years now. I started in the late 60s, early 70s. My early training was on safeguard thinking and safeguard systems. It was then that I started to see how it could apply to individuals as well.

HOW WOULD YOU EXPLAIN WHAT SAFEGUARDS IS TO SOMEONE YOU MEET ON THE STREET?

Well it doesn't start with safeguards as much as it starts with a concern for people's welfare and their well being. So if all of us were just a little bit more aware of people's vulnerabilities and were concerned about them as people, we could develop an ethic of personal responsibility relative to vulnerable persons.

YOU COMPLETED AN EVALUATION AND A REPORT REGARDING CLBC'S SAFEGUARDS INITIATIVE. WHY EVALUATE THE INITIATIVE?

It needed to be evaluated because it was a new initiative for CLBC and they wanted to get some sense of where it fit into things, hence, the recommendations. This isn't unusual, when a new program is developed, people tend to evaluate things and see what they should be doing or not doing. In this case, the evaluation was quite positive.

YOU DID THE RESEARCH; YOU EVALUATED CLBC'S SAFEGUARDS INITIATIVE. WHAT MAKES THIS PROGRAM STAND OUT?

Well there are a number of key features that make this program stand out. CLBC did a great job at educating and raising awareness and the consciousness of safeguards in a way that engaged people. The project looked at the role that the community could play in safeguarding. So it tapped into a huge source of potential safeguards, and in a sense alerted people that we can do more within community.

Another thing that stands out is that although the project was initiated by CLBC, it was carried out by multiple parties. So it has the effect of broadening the impact of the project, almost magnifying it through all of the partnerships. It is not uncommon for a non government organization to take on an initiative like this, but it was unusual for a government organization to be that visionary and innovative. So I thought it was a distinctly internationally significant initiative by a provincial government and could be a model for other governments to learn from.

YOU TRAVEL AND TEACH ALL OVER THE WORLD. DOES CLBC'S SAFEGUARDS INITIATIVE STAND OUT ON A GLOBAL SCALE?

I would say it very much stands out. It's a combination of CLBC wanting to make a difference and wanting to stand out and having a very strong advisory committee and lots of other people involved. I think it was the mobilizing of talent in BC that worked and this kind of project can be modeled for other kinds of initiatives.

A full transcript of this interview will be included in the online version of The Citizen on the CLBC website under What's New > Newsletter. Dr. Michael Kendrick's evaluation of CLBC's Safeguards Initiative is also available on the website under Individuals & Families > Safeguards.

To learn more about Dr. Michael Kendrick, please visit his website at www.kendrickconsulting.org. ■



Dr. Michael Kendrick presents information on Safeguards to CLBC staff.

North Island connections

JAY TOWNSEND, THE “COMMUNITY connector” for the North Island Connector Project (NICP), is clearly passionate about the work he’s done over the last year to connect self advocates with generic services in Campbell River.

“This project has a true person-centred focus because it is led by the participant’s interests and skills,” says Jay. “It’s given me the chance to be incredibly responsive to a person’s needs, and to develop a rapport and trust with them so we can connect their gifts within the community.”

The NICP is an initiative that focused on providing people eligible for CLBC supports with the chance to explore and connect in meaningful ways with resources in the Campbell River area. Eight individuals – four men and four women – were involved in the project from April 2010 to January 2011. The participants were identified by the CLBC facilitator involved in the project, Caroline Sanderson. Participants ranged in age from 19 to 54, and they had interests as diverse as volunteering at a local food program to playing pool. Activities participants were involved in were determined by them; Jay provided support in connecting them to their interests.

One of the participants, Doris, is an outgoing, sociable and independent person. She is fairly new to the Campbell River area, and at the onset knew she wanted to connect to volunteering and social activities. However, Doris’s home share is outside of the Campbell River city limits, and many of the activities she wanted to be involved in were downtown. Jay helped her learn how to navigate the transit system, and also helped her get a BC

ID card needed to access volunteer opportunities. Doris is now connected with knitting and fitness groups at a 50+ group at the local recreation centre, and is volunteering at the Lighthouse, a local resource that feeds Campbell River’s vulnerable population.

“Doris was at the helm of all the activities we did together,” says Jay. “Once I had introduced Doris to a group or setting, she took those opportunities and made them her own. She is now in town five days a week at activities.”

“NICP really allowed Doris to explore her strengths,” says Caroline. “The community has truly benefited because Doris is now involved with community in a way that enables her to give back.”

A younger participant, Matt, wanted to focus on making connections around his interests, which include golf, pool and music. Jay and Matt started to attend a weekly 9-ball tournament at Oceanview Billiards, and also spent time at the Storey Creek Golf Course. Out of these events came opportunities for Matt to play his first 9-hole round of golf with people outside of his family, and to build a relationship with the pool hall owners who have now offered to pick him up weekly so he can continue to play pool.

“I think this project has been beneficial for everyone involved – individuals, CLBC and the community,” says Jay. “The participants gained connections, CLBC gained a greater understanding of what engagement can look like, and the community learned more about diversity.”

The last stage of the project is focused on training based on the knowledge gained through the project. Jay is conducting Building Bridges sessions with service providers, home share providers and caregivers in the Central and Upper Island in February and March. To find out more, or to register for a session, contact Jay at jay@cvbct.com. ■



Doris Rathke (seated) with Linda Lien from her knitting group.

You asked us: Employment

WELCOME TO CLBC'S FIRST

"You asked us" column where CLBC staff answer your questions about CLBC supports and services.

This month, Barb Penner, Employment Initiative Coordinator, answers your questions about employment. Barb leads CLBC's Employment Initiative, which builds partnerships and strategies with groups, organizations and employers across the province to increase "real work for real pay" opportunities for people with developmental disabilities.

1. HOW WILL CLBC HELP ME FIND A JOB?

A CLBC facilitator will work with you to find the best employment supports for you. This might include finding employment supports, learning about employment services outside of CLBC, or recording your request on CLBC's request for service registry.

CLBC funds service providers in community that have experience in the area of employment. Employment specialists, employment councillors, job developers or job coaches are some of the kinds of supports you might choose. Employment professionals will work with you to make an employment plan that talks about the skills that you have, the best kind of workplace for you and what supports you will need.

Employment professionals might help you apply for jobs or work with you to figure out how to create a job that use your work skills. They can also help with interview skills, what to do at the start of a new job, and helping co-workers understand how to support you at work. The employment specialist will always be available for you to call if you need them.

2. WHAT TRAINING IS AVAILABLE?

CLBC service providers can provide support for training like Food Safe, WHMIS and First Aid. Sometimes this can be paid for through other government programs.

The Employment Program for People with Disabilities (EPPD) through the Ministry of Social Development also provides training. If you are interested in applying, talk to your CLBC facilitator.

3. WILL I GET TO KEEP MY PAID BUS PASS WHEN I HAVE A JOB?

As long as you still receive disability assistance, you will continue to qualify for a yearly bus pass.

4. DOES IT MATTER IF I DON'T HAVE ANY JOB EXPERIENCE?

Employment service providers help many people that do not have any job experience find work. You might have lots of skills and don't even know it!

The employment specialist will work with you to figure out what you can do now, the things that you like to do, and how these can turn into a job for you. The most important thing for anyone looking for work is that they want to work and have a positive attitude.

5. WILL I GET THE SAME WAGES AS OTHER PEOPLE DOING THE SAME JOB?

Yes. You will be paid the same starting wage as anyone else. The BC Employment Standards Act says that all work must be paid at minimum wage or better unless the person is being paid a training wage. This is the same for all citizens of BC. The only exception will be if your employer asked you to participate in work experience. You will be asked to agree to do work experience.



Barb Penner (right) shares information about employment with attendees at the BC Chamber of Commerce Annual General Meeting.

6. HOW MUCH CAN I EARN BEFORE IT AFFECTS MY PWD/DISABILITY ASSISTANCE? DO I HAVE TO REPORT ALL MY INCOME?

You can earn up to \$500.00 before your disability assistance is reduced. It is the law that you report all of your earnings.

7. IF THEY TAKE MONEY OFF MY PWD, WHY SHOULD I WORK?

Many people who work and make more than the \$500.00 earnings exemption tell us that even though it was hard to make the choice to work, they are glad they did it.

People who have made this choice say they live a more independent life. They also learn new skills, meet new friends and feel good about making a difference in their workplace. ■

Service with a smile

RHONDA STOUGHTON WAS LOOKING for a job in Kelowna with the support of her employment service provider TIER Support. She was interested in working for a business where customer service was the focus of her duties.

She interviewed for a job as a café attendant at Starbucks, a job she was very interested in. Rhonda was successful and started working with Michelle the store manager and the Starbucks team at the Bernard Street location in Kelowna. She was one of the first café attendants hired in Kelowna. Rhonda and Michelle worked out her duties and responsibilities.

Soon after she was hired, Rhonda moved to Vernon and feared that she would lose the job that she loved. However, Michelle contacted the Vernon Village Green Starbucks location and talked to the manager Kelly to see if Rhonda could transfer to that location. Much to Rhonda's delight, Kelly agreed to hire Rhonda and to be her new manager.

Rhonda works at the Village Green Mall Starbucks location every Friday from 9:00am to 11:00am.

"My job is awesome! I absolutely love my job. The people I work with and my boss are great and a lot of fun. I really enjoy talking

with customers as they come in and enjoy my duties as well," she says.

Rhonda's responsibilities include: making sure the crates are full, filling up the milk, cream and honey, washing dishes, making sure the bathrooms have supplies and taking out the garbage.

Rhonda gets help from her co-workers and especially her boss, Kelly. Kelly supports all the staff to have a work environment where everyone helps one another. Rhonda is quite fond of her boss and explains that, "Kelly is a very understanding, kind person."

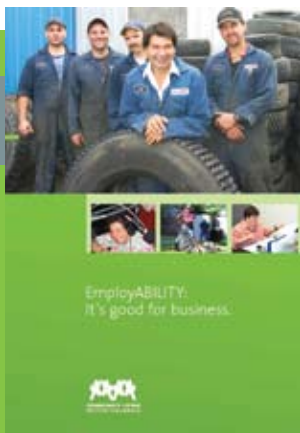
Kelly has been very impressed with Rhonda as an employee, "She is a great worker. She is bubbly and upbeat, the kind of worker people would expect at a coffee shop."

Kelly also notes that Rhonda has added to the business as regulars come in on Fridays just because Rhonda is there. According to Kelly, there have been numerous times when customers have popped in to say that they respect the fact that the Starbucks Village Green location is an equal opportunity employer.

Rhonda enjoys her work at Starbucks and is hoping to work more hours at her current location and to also work at the other Starbucks in Vernon. ■



Rhonda Stoughton brings smiles to the faces of customers at Starbucks in Vernon.



EmployABILITY: It's good for business

CLBC'S EmployABILITY brochure highlights the benefits for businesses of employing people with developmental disabilities. The brochure has been distributed to employment service providers across BC. It is also available on the CLBC website under Individuals & Families > Employment and can be requested by contacting Barb Penner, Employment Initiative Coordinator, at Barb.Penner@gov.bc.ca.

Celebrating contribution

NOMINATIONS ARE NOW BEING ACCEPTED THROUGH APRIL 10, 2011 FOR the WOW!clbc Awards. Everyone is invited to recognize their community inclusion champions.

WOW!clbc acknowledges the important contributions of all CLBC's partners in building and fostering community inclusion and full citizenship for adults with developmental disabilities. Every year, nominations are accepted in four categories: Family Member, Community Partner, Service Provider and Self-Advocate. Ten awards (two per region) are given each year at regional award ceremonies in May, and recipients' stories are featured on CLBC's WOW!clbc recognition website at www.WOWclbc.ca, in The Citizen, and on CLBC's social media sites.



The Awards celebrate new and innovative ways of achieving the vision of “good lives in welcoming communities” by recognizing the hard work, perseverance and achievements of individuals and groups throughout BC. Here are quotes from past nominators and nominees:

“People need to know to never give up. There are times when I have wanted to give up, and I just keep going. If there are challenges, or people tell you, you can’t do it, just keep trucking along.”

- Barb Goode, Self Advocate, Award Recipient for her work with the United Nations, Supreme Court of Canada and BC’s Justice System to recognize the rights of adults with developmental disabilities

“Greg Schiller has helped me so much in the past with my struggles, and to know my rights. I didn’t know how to help people and I wanted to. He’s helped me to live a life in society.”

- Bryce Schaufulberger, Self-Advocate, Nominator

“When I think about “Widening Our World”, it’s so important to find ways to make connections. One of the ways we’ve been doing this is through employment. Employment is a great way to connect people to community, to build networks and provide a sense of self worth. It’s a great thing to do.”

- Chris Arnold, Provincial Networking Group, Award Recipient for his work connecting people with community through employment

“Keith Pennock is an expert at connecting people with systems, and getting systems that don’t traditionally work for adults with developmental disabilities to work for them. He is a knight in shining armour.”

- Kristen Kay, Becon Support Services, Nominator

To nominate your local inclusion champions, or for more information about WOW!clbc, please visit the CLBC website under Opportunities > Recognition Awards, or contact your local CLBC office. ■

Initiative changes lives

THE PERSONALIZED SUPPORTS

Initiative (PSI) is making a real difference in the life of 19-year-old Michael. He is making some big changes thanks to the support and understanding he receives from Community Living BC, Interior Community Services and Ask Wellness. Michael's home is in Kamloops BC where life has not always been easy for him. He came into care at the age of 16 and was living in a residential placement before turning 19. Through the new PSI, CLBC worked together with the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), Interior Community Services and Ask Wellness to plan with Michael.

CLBC Facilitator, Wendy Peschick, was part of this planning process

and speaks highly of Michael and the working partnership between the four agencies. "MCFD did a great job in securing housing for Michael and helped him transition to new services and supports when he turned 19," said Wendy. "Without the support from PSI and community services Michael could be living in an unsafe environment, instead he is moving on with his life, applying for jobs, looking for new friends and voicing his opinion in positive ways."

Michael's living situation is unique, it is a great example of how services can come together to support people. He lives in an apartment block where there is somebody on site who he can touch base with on a regular basis. This network and the support he receives through the PSI empowers Michael to

live on his own and helps him feel safe and secure.

CLBC's PSI is helping Michael connect with his community, learn new life skills and find employment. Michael likes the flexibility that PSI provides in his life, he says nobody is forcing him to do things; instead they are helping him take action in ways that work for him and encouraging him to experience new things.

"Michael has a great sense of humour, he really enjoys playing video games and he has gone from a kid with many challenges to an adult who thinks life can be good," says Wendy. "He is very excited and hopeful about his life and I admire him for his strength and courage." ■

Wrapping up cheer

THE COMOX VALLEY SELF-

Advocates and their friends spent the month of December at the local mall wrapping presents to raise funds for their group. "That's a Wrap" is the name of the fun event which takes place at a local mall in Courtenay every year.

"This is our major fundraiser for the year," says Mike McLellan. "We really work hard and it pays off"

Local businesses donate all the paper, tape, ribbon and trimmings to the group who spend many hours offering a convenient and highly spirited gift wrapping service to shoppers. Donations are accepted and all the proceeds are used by the group through the year for projects and other expenses.

"Driftwood mall also donates the space to us which is so great," said Nicole Dowling, a member of the group. "We wrap about a million presents," she added with a smile.

People drop in to have their gifts wrapped, share a joke or two with everyone or just to hang out and share the Christmas spirit.

"We do our best with the weirdly shaped gifts," laughed Tanya Norman who came over from Powell River to support her friends. "Sometimes you just put a bow on it and it looks good."

A new development for the group is the creation of a one-time grant for a self-advocate who might need assistance to buy a piece of medical equipment or something that might make their life easier. They can apply to the group who will use some of the proceeds from "That's a Wrap".

"We will award the grant to one person per year," explained Mike. "It carries on the Christmas spirit. We want to inspire other self-advocate groups to get creative about fundraising and to think of ways to help others." ■



Mike McLellan and Tanya Norman pitch in with wrapping gifts.

Honouring dedication



Veronica Marach is joined by her family as she receives an Award of Excellence from the BCASW.

VERONICA MARACH, AN ANALYST IN CLBC's Surrey Quality Service Office, was recently recognized with an Award of Excellence by the BC Association of Social Workers (BCASW).

The BCASW Board instituted a special recognition at their 2010 Annual General Meeting and Conference. The recognition is for a member who exemplifies what it means to live out their core social work values.

"She always goes the extra mile to make sure our clients are well served," said Nancy Bell, a CLBC Supervisor of Administrative Services who works with Veronica.

Veronica was nominated by Anne Nikon, Executive Director of W. J. Stelmaschuk and Associates. Her nomination

describes Veronica as "someone who has devoted many years of her life to ensure people with disabilities have a high quality of life and are truly included in their communities."

The award was presented in a small, surprise ceremony at the Surrey office on December 20. Veronica's family, who were in on the surprise, also attended to share the celebration with her.

"It's really an honour. I'm glad I could bring the award to CLBC. It recognizes service to individuals and because CLBC is person-focused, it very much coincides with our social work goals to help people make their lives as good as possible," says Veronica. "It doesn't matter our job title, we're all working for the same purpose, to make individuals' lives better." ■

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