

FEATURED STORY

The Value of Community Partners

By Eric Laimer

Last May marked the 15th anniversary of the Community Partners event in Etobicoke/York region. The event celebrates and recognizes outstanding contributions by local businesses, professionals, and other paid members of the community to the people that we support and to our Community Living Toronto staff. Our Community Partners range from local businesses that employ the people that we support to the friendly neighbourhood hairdresser that offers a great hairstyle at an affordable price.

The partnerships that are formed between Community Living Toronto and the local business community are extremely valuable. Elk Shipping Supplies is one such community partner and has had a close relationship with Etobicoke Employment Training Services (ETS) for well over 20 years. Located in Mississauga, they have provided contract work to trainees and donated tape, box board and other supplies to keep the shipping department well stocked. While Ernie Morrison, owner of Elk Shipping Supplies, has semi-retired, he has passed the torch to his daughter Kelly Morrison

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who has kept the partnership alive. Ernie continues to attend the Community Partners events even in retirement!

Housing co-operatives are yet another example of valuable community partnerships. One cannot begin to estimate the value of providing a safe, clean and welcoming home to the people in the Supported Independent Living (SIL) program. Hickory Tree Co-op and Birmingham Co-operative Homes are two outstanding housing communities staffed by understanding, hardworking and thoughtful people. In fact, Megan Facey, Hickory Tree Co-op Manger, was last year's award recipient for Community Partner of the Year.

Some Community Partners provide support in less obvious ways that are still highly valued. Debbie Thompson is a bank teller at TD Canada Trust. Every week she provides exceptionally friendly and thoughtful service to an individual in the SIL program. With her help, this person is able to bank independently with confidence and without needing accompaniment to the bank by a SIL worker.

Community Living Toronto Staff nominate their Community Partners every year for the annual recognition event dinner held in May. Trident Banquet Hall has been the host venue for five years and has also become a Community Partner! Nominees receive an invite to the event and a framed certificate to display in recognition of their support. The dinner offers staff an opportunity to recognize their partners and further strengthen the bond between them and Community Living Toronto. Etobicoke/York Region Council generously funds half the cost of the event. Sandy Ashwell, Pina Bresciani, Kathy Bacchichet, Jenny Anzin, Keri Hill and Eric Laimer form the event planning committee that makes the event happen every year.

Whether it is providing paid work, volunteer opportunities, staff support or direct service to the people that we support, Community Partners are incredibly valuable to helping people with an Intellectual Disability create fulfilling lives in their communities.



Sybil Rampen displays her Community Partner certificate with Harold Tomlinson, Supervisor of Creative Village Studio.



Lynn Ross (right) receives her Community Partner of the Year award from Derek Campbell (left) and Rosemarie Alegbe (centre)

CORE

Municipal Election Coming Up Soon:

On October 27, Toronto goes to the polls to elect the new administration. Candidates are knocking on doors, and competing in candidate debates all over the city. What can you do to see if your local councillor candidates and mayoral candidates will do for people with an intellectual disability? Community Living Toronto has compiled a list of questions that you can ask. To see what they, go to our [website](#).

ODSP is not a measure of last resort

Ron Malis, M.B.A. – Financial Advisor

The Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) provides a monthly income benefit for people with disabilities in financial need. It is a complex program, yet it is often defined in very simple terms.



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ODSP is a “means-tested” benefit. In order to qualify, applicants must demonstrate they are in financial need. More specifically, an individual without dependents must have less than \$5,000 in assets and be earning little income. ODSP recipients who accumulate more than the \$5,000 exemption can lose their ODSP benefits. This is a basic explanation rather than a hard and fast rule.

Many parents with children over the age of 18 who have a developmental disability have the means to support their child with the help of ODSP, but they need help. ODSP benefits help, but they do not provide enough to maintain a reasonable standard of living. Parents, who can, supplement ODSP benefits, but they run the risk of jeopardizing their child’s ODSP benefits. Parents can supplement a child’s ODSP, but how they do it, is critically important.

Planning, especially preparing for the long-term requires an understanding of ODSP that goes beyond the basics and into the detail. ODSP policy directives are hundreds of pages. Parents do not need to understand each policy directive, chapter and verse, but an understanding of some key sections will benefit

them immensely, helping them plan for the future more effectively.

Let’s continue the conversation. For a case study and extended article on this topic visit <http://connectability.ca/connected-families/-/categories/financial-and-legal-planning>

Ron Malis is an Insurance Advisor with Independent Financial Concepts Group Ltd. and a Financial Advisor with Worldsource Financial Management Inc. His core focus is working with people with disabilities and their supporting family members. Ron has written many articles on the subject of ODSP, the RDSP and estate planning for families who have children with disabilities. These can be found at www.ronmalis.com



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Through our Securing Futures and Connecting Families series of conferences, seminars and articles, Community Living Toronto is committed to providing individuals and families with tools and information to assist them at all stages of life.

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A list of lawyers and financial advisors familiar with planning for individuals with disabilities can be provided by contacting your Membership Coordinator, if needed. We urge you to discuss your personal situation with them and then decide which one you would like to work with. Make sure that you are that you are comfortable that the professional you have selected meets your needs, fits your budget and understands the issues of planning for a person with a disability.

Art Therapy & Self Expression at Central ADP

By Eric Laimer

Mayson Edell, an Art Therapy student from the Toronto Art Therapy Institute is completing her placement at Central Adult Development Program (ADP). When Mayson was choosing her placement, she had walked by the Foster's Clubhouse several times and became curious. After some research, she felt that CL Toronto could offer her a unique learning experience, one that would allow her to learn about a population she was unfamiliar with and where she could potentially make a difference.

At Central ADP, Mayson works with small groups allowing her to give individualized attention to each participant. She uses a variety of mediums such as paint, drawing, clay and puppets to allow for self-expression. In the time that she has been at the ADP, she has had the opportunity to see people learn, grow and become more confident.

Mayson describes an improvement in developmental shape progress, meaning individuals are concentrating on what they are drawing and their pictures are more recognizable. As a result, their stories are becoming clearer. She also is seeing longer attention spans and a general desire to become more involved.

Over the course of her placement, Mayson will continue to work with the groups to help the individuals expand their developmental and social skills by offering more ways to express themselves through art. She hopes to help those she is supporting access their community in a way that is beneficial to them and in turn help them to achieve their personal goals.

Mayson said that working with the individuals we support has been a very positive

experience and she is enjoying her time with us. She finds the work she is doing very rewarding and would recommend a placement at CL Toronto to future students as we are able to provide a unique opportunity for learning.

Furniture Bank Provides Meaningful Employment Opportunity

An excerpt by Cam Gordon,
FurnitureBank.org



Carlo, centre, sharing a laugh with his co-workers.

Carlo, an individual supported by Manson Employment Training Services, first started working at Furniture Bank as a volunteer placement through Community Living Toronto after seeing a news piece on the organization on CP24. Furniture Bank is a charity that obtains furniture from those who no longer need it, and transfers it to others in the community who do. Initially, Carlo visited the facility with the intention of making a donation, but upon arriving, he decided to augment his gift of furniture with the gift of time.

Carlo spends two days a week at Furniture Bank, and has quickly become a member of the family. He began his placement shuttling couches, tables and chairs around in their Madison Avenue location, demonstrating exemplary work ethic and enthusiasm for

helping others. Whether it was loading or unloading trucks, packing boxes of housewares to be sorted for donation or helping to sand down wooden tables and chairs, Carlo made a big impact within the small team and he's now been enjoying a paid position with the organization for the past seven years.

"This job is a big part of Carlo's life," says support staff Rick Kane. "There is a reason Carlo typically will show up to work an hour early. It's a highlight of his week and it's great for him to have the ability to help out and be active. In general, other organizations would be so lucky as to have staff that are that excited to start their work day."

Aside from his obvious passion for the work he does, Carlo always helps to keep the mood light at work, even during busy times. He often offers up hugs, shares laughs and always keeps spirits high. Passion is a big element in all the work Furniture Bank does, and Carlo is a major contributor in this and many other categories.

ETOBICOKE REGION

A Community of Friendship and Bowling

By Eric Laimer

For over 18 years, the Tri-Hards Bowling League has been a sociable and inviting community for everyone with a common interest in bowling. The league has been run with heart felt dedication by Bruce and Diana Morris. Bruce's involvement with the Tri-Hards began 28 years ago. As a volunteer, he assisted Mr. and Mrs. Smith with the bowling league when it was run out of Jane Park Plaza. When Mr. Smith passed away, Bruce took over coordination of the league.

When Bowlerama Jane Park closed, Bruce had to look for a new venue. Danny DeFrancesco at Bowlerama West was welcoming and offered the league a low cost location that was

conveniently close to Kipling Subway Station. A long standing community partnership formed with Bowlerama West and it continues to be the home of the Tri-Hards Bowling League.

Since the Jane Park Plaza days, the league has grown from 47 to over 80 bowlers. Bruce and Diana make it their priority to ensure that the league is a friendly and sociable place for everyone. As Diana stated, "The Tri-Hards is really its own small community. It's a great place for people that are shy to make friends." Once bowlers join the league, they often make long standing friendships. Some former league members, who are no longer able to bowl due to health concerns, still come out to the bowling sessions to be with their friends and cheer them on.

Over 20 volunteers keep the league running smoothly by score keeping and assisting the bowlers as needed. Bowlers are usually paired with the same score keepers every time so that they get to know each other well and feel comfortable. For their efforts, score keepers enjoy free coffee, soft drinks and a lot of camaraderie.

The league starts in early September and features some additional fun events throughout the bowling season; every other year, bowlers receive a Tri-Hards bowling t-shirt, birthdays are announced every session, and October is lucky prize draw month. In mid-December, everyone is treated to a Holiday Party. Bowlerama West staff prepare a specially priced lunch and many of the volunteers bake cookies and other treats before everyone hits the lanes at 2:00pm. The season wraps up in mid-May with a blockbuster banquet featuring a deejay, dancing, prizes, and great food. All participants receive a trophy and there are additional prizes for bowlers with the highest scores and other achievements.

Bruce and Diana Morris have invested countless hours and even some of their money to make the Tri-Hards Bowling League the success that it is. They have also coordinated a truly communal effort by forming partnerships with Bowlerama West, other local businesses and recruiting volunteers. The Tri-Hards Bowling League is truly a community within a community! If you are interested in joining the

league, volunteering or being involved in another capacity, please contact Bruce or Diana Morris at (416) 239-8551.

NORTH YORK REGION

Remembering Kalisha Sunshine Seymour

By Dianne Doan



Remembering Sunshine and her incredible spirit

Sunshine was a daughter, a sister, a sister in law, an aunt, a niece, and a forever friend to many.

In 2000 when I first met Sunshine, she was 23 years old. Our open door policy meant her mother, Cicely, would drop Sunshine off and stay to discuss what Sunshine would be doing or to clarify something or to advocate on Sunshine's behalf. This was the start of our ongoing connection.

Sunshine's high energy level meant she was always busy and motivated to work. Her peers described her as strong with a good memory for a lot of things and she was very generous. She described herself as an artist. Sunshine had many one line zingers, such as 'Get a life', 'Oh please', 'You're cute' and 'Don't push me'.

As a way to connect some of the individuals in service, I started a signing class for the hearing impaired workers. One individual signed to her he had a headache. Sunshine offered him some Tylenol she had in her bag. This was one

of her many ways of showing compassion for others. Sunshine was always checking in to see how everyone was by asking, 'Are you OK?'

Sunshine also attended literacy classes at 20 Spadina and created some very special relationships with people there. More recently, Sunshine had a job working in our Spadina Coffee Den. As with everywhere Sunshine went, she expanded her unique circle of friends here. Sunshine also had a Best Buddy, Christine, who went out in the community with her to do things. Sunshine loved going out with her 'Study Buddy' as she referred to Christine.

Sunshine's favorite place in the summertime was Shadow Lake camp. Every summer she spent a couple of weeks at camp doing different outdoor activities. She always told me how much money she was going to take for the tuck shop to buy her treats, and how she was going to pack her books to take along. When she returned from camp each year she spoke of the experience for the rest of the year until it was time to go again. In the past year we had started going to Downsview library to get books or DVD's to watch. Sunshine would ask the librarian to search for numerous books and loved going there.

Sunshine's picture was used on many of Community Living Toronto's promotional materials.

She was a great ambassador for Community Living Toronto and will be greatly missed by so many people.

SCARBOROUGH REGION

Summer Literacy Program Highlights

By Summer Literacy

We had another great year at the Summer Literacy Program. Some of the activities we participated in included bowling at Parkway Bowl and going to Ripley's Aquarium. Aside from holding bake sales and participating in a

number of social activities including going to Canada's Wonderland, students also worked hard and performed 'Frozen' for their family and friends.

The Summer Literacy program is sponsored by our Scarborough Council. This year, the program took place at St. Victor's School. For more information, please contact Felicity Zanatta at (647) 729-1635.

SAC UPDATE

Self-Advocates Council Members Lead Friends Through the My Rights, My Choices Game!

By Sue Hutton



From l to r: Caseen, Paul, Sam, Lorraine and Shineeca standing on the My Rights, My Choices Game Board at the Self Advocates Council's Annual Meeting.

The Self Advocates Council came back together after a fun summer off. In order to set goals for the new season, they first reflected on work they did in the spring.

The group remembered the interactive rights game they led friends through in June at the Annual Meeting, called *My Rights, My Choices*. "It was a blast!" Sam McKhail remembers. The game has been piloted by dedicated staff at many locations across Community Living Toronto over the last two years. This was the final pilot, in which the Self Advocates Council led a group of friends and self-advocates through the game.

Community Living Toronto provides services for people across such a wide range of communication needs, and we need to have games for everyone. The Self Advocates Council wants to make sure that we have rights training games that meet everyone's needs. That's why we are developing a "backpack" of tools – games and activities - that meet a diverse range of people's learning needs. Piloting over the last two years and getting feedback from our various programs was the first step. The Self Advocates Council endorses the *My Rights, My Choices* game, and will soon be helping to deliver it in programs across the association.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AWARDS

Alexander Muir Gladstone Public School Teacher Wins Award for Inclusive Education

By Mia McGowan

Each year Community Living Toronto chooses a teacher, educational assistant, principal, and at times, an entire school who promotes the inclusion of students with an intellectual disability. Inclusion is much more than a child being included in the classroom.

EVENTS/WORKSHOPS

WORK: A Workshop Presented by Staff Lawyers from ARCH Disability Law Centre

Tuesday, October 21
1-3pm
20 Spadina Board Room

If you are an employed person with an intellectual disability, this workshop is all about you and your rights in the workplace.

For more information or to RSVP
Contact Sue Hutton: 647-729-1205
shutton@cltoronto.ca

2014 Connected Families Forum

Saturday, October 25
9am-3pm
Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre
More information:

<http://cltoronto.ca/registration-now-open-connected-families-forum-2014/>

For more Community Living Toronto events,
visit our website: <http://www.cltoronto.ca>

It's about each child being part of the life of the school's community and being able to make choices that are right for him or her. This maximizes learning, individual development and opportunities for friendship. Inclusion increases appreciation and acceptance of individual differences and prepares everyone for adult life in an inclusive society.

Nominations are submitted from across Toronto, from both the public and Catholic boards, by parents, students and colleagues. This year the deserving recipient of the Award for Inclusive Education went to James McLaughlin from Alexander Muir Gladstone public school.

Mr. McLaughlin has expressed a keen interest in a student with Autism Spectrum Disorder in his classroom. When the student is feeling sensory overloaded or is over-excited, Mr. McLaughlin walks him down to the library or other classrooms to be with the older students. Due to Mr. McLaughlin's efforts, the student has daily printing support from an Early Childhood Educator in the school. He now knows all his numbers and how to print them. Mr. McLaughlin treats the child no differently than the others, just like an average kid, and does not even worry about taking him on field trips. All of Mr. McLaughlin's reports were positive and constructive at a school support team meeting. He is incredibly collaborative and receptive to all programming ideas and strategies. The student very obviously loves his teacher, and we know that when a child with extra support needs expresses this kind of love and respect, the teacher must be the genuine article.

Congratulations James McLaughlin.

