

COMMUNITY LIVING  
Owen Sound and District

# Perspectives



## Staff Feature – Sue and Her Staff!

We are happy to announce that Sue's department has grown from two employees to five. From left to right: Sue Skinner is manager of quality assurance and resources, and has been with Community Living Owen Sound and District for almost 35 years; Jane McLaughlin, superintendent of the apartments on 3rd Avenue for over a year; Kim McCorkindale, community support worker for 11 years, and is a job developer with the Ontario Disability Employment Support Program; Patrick Dorfman, our new building maintenance and repair guy for over six months now; Jessica Melanson, human resources assistant for over four months; and Gareth Lloyd, workplace learning coordinator for 11 years. With this group having different jobs and being at different locations, Sue is a busy lady but is enjoying connecting with all of them.

## Welcome Springtime

Submitted by Fely Clarke

It has been a very challenging time for each and every one of us facing this coronavirus pandemic. Lo and behold, here come the welcoming

gorgeous colours of spring. Pussy willows and red tulips from Wendy Woodhouse (support pool, community support staff) put an awesome splash of colour and signs of

springtime at our front door. Yes, like other work places, we are closed to the public but seeing this welcoming sign surely gives very uplifting feelings and a smile. Simple, yet very becoming... welcome gorgeous springtime in this very challenging time.

As Wendy puts a loving touch to her creation, it is a great reminder that we are all in this pandemic together. Somehow along the way there's always a flickering light at the end of the tunnel.

Keep our physical distance in check all the time for our own safety and security... but keep a smile on your face and keep sharing from your loving heart for it shows an enormous act of kindness.

As Albert Einstein quoted, "In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity."



## From Watching on the Inside, To Watching from the Outside

A reflection of children's services during the COVID-19 pandemic

Submitted by

Stephanie McGregor

Our work in children's services is like waves on the ocean. Sometimes it is a calm day, with ripples of visits, phone contact, and problem solving with families. Other days, it's like a stormy winter day, waves of crisis and needs for families crashing over us while we help parents, care providers and children keep their heads above water.

Our work has always been

flexible, trying to match the needs of the families we support. Sometimes it is just a listening ear, and other times we provide hands-on activity suggestions and advocating for the needs of a child. Our infant and child development team and special needs resource team have always learned to move with the flow of the water and follow a family's lead. But this... this is different.

See 'We Are' on Page 3

## Bob the Builder

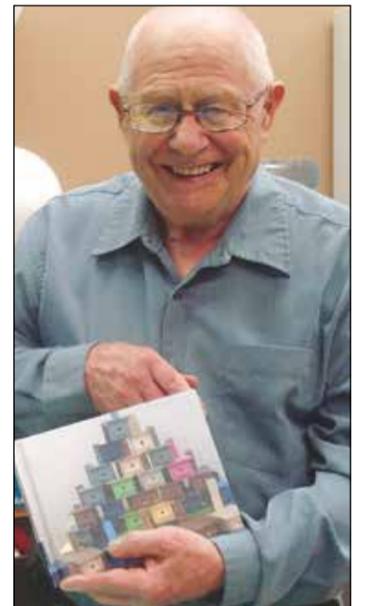
Woodworking volunteer Bob Hunt

Submitted by Marsha Blum

After 10 years, Community Living Owen Sound and District is saying goodbye to long-standing volunteer, Bob Hunt, who we first became acquainted with in 2010. At that time, he joined forces with Janet Pawsey, a 2nd Avenue staff member who ran a woodworking activity for a session. It was a great success and everyone loved it!

Janet retired in 2011 and in October 2012, I wanted to see the woodworking activity offered once again. I reconnected with Bob and a partnership with him and the Sydenham Sportsman's Club began. Since then, well over 900 birdhouses, bee boxes and bat houses have been constructed and placed around Owen Sound and the surrounding area.

Over the years, Bob's become cherished in the heart of many woodworking participants and has been



affectionally dubbed "Bob the Builder". His smile, gentle demeanor, positive outlook and words of encouragement have empowered everyone he has connected with. When asked what kept him coming back year after year, he shared, "It's been the people that have kept me coming back."

When asked about his

See 'Bob Has' on Page 2



## Helping Hands — Giving Back To the Community

By Marsha Blum

“You’re such an asset!” “You’re doing such a great job!” How wonderful it feels when a person hears these words. Positive affirmations such as these provide a person with a sense of self worth, fulfillment and empowerment, propelling them forward. These very words have been said to a group of people participating in the new 2nd Avenue activity called “Helping Hands”.

The “Helping Hands” activity was developed to provide individuals with an opportunity to learn volunteer/employment skills, become acquainted with local organizations, participate in the life of the community; and to give back to the community.

To date, the group has partnered with two local organizations where they have delivered flyers for community events, shredded paper, stuffed and labelled envelopes, packed artifacts for safe keeping, filled treat bags for local events, and assisted in preparations for the local backpack distribution. The group is also currently involved in a local project where milk bags are weaved into sleeping mats. The mat we are currently working on will go to an orphanage in the British Honduras.

Volunteering in the community has had a huge impact in the lives of each group member. I have

witnessed their awe and expression of amazement when they have learned how far-reaching their help is being experienced, whether it is locally or in another country! “This is amazing!” said one of the group members when they learned the extent of their contributions. Suddenly everyone saw themselves as not being in an activity, but being part of a much larger picture. They see themselves as being valued, having a purpose and contributing to society. One person’s comment said it all: “We are making a difference!”

I recall one day when the group had completed a momentous task that had been weighing on the staff at one local organization. I watched as the group received praise for their hard work and was told the job couldn’t have been done without them. In that instant, I watched each person smile and sit a little taller. I have witnessed the excitement and joy of individuals when they had their picture posted on an organization’s website praising the work the group has done.

The “Helping Hands” activity has been a huge success. One that has been measured by the impact it has had on the lives of each group member, by them knowing that they have made a difference and have touched the lives of other individuals!

## Bruce Shoreline Advocates

The Bruce Shoreline Advocates are planning to do multiple things with our group. We are fundraising and trying to plan different courses. The group fundraised in November selling Epicure dips and seasonings. Now we are going to try to plan a First Aid course, a CPR course and

selling flower bulbs and seed packets. All the money we collect from our fundraisers go to a charity of our choice. We are going with the money from the Epicure sales and giving half the money to the Canadian Diabetes Association and the Canadian Celiac Association.

# The Love of the Theatre Brings Exciting New Possibilities

By Scott White, support worker Gary has always loved and appreciated going to see plays and concerts. A couple of years ago he discovered that his good friend Shawn also had the same interest which has led to them going to see a couple of musicals in Stratford together.

More recently, both Gary and Shawn were approved to receive Passport funding, and while helping Gary to plan activities and new opportunities that were now open to him, he expressed an interest in going on an overnight trip with Shawn to see a play. Shawn was interested in going as well. Gary and his support staff looked at all the cities that had productions on at the time, and chose Toronto. Once he had decided on a city we then looked at the productions on offer. We compiled a shortlist and then asked Shawn what he would be interested in. After some consideration the play chosen was the smash hit “Come From Away” being performed at The Royal Alexandra Theatre.

The day that they chose was

at the beginning of March. Tickets were picked and purchased and a hotel was booked as well. There were some nerves about the trip, but they quickly vanished once we were on the road. The hotel and the staff there were great — the men got a nice suite, so everyone had their own space if needed.

The hotel was within walking distance of the Theatre District, and as it was a lovely evening we decided to walk to and from the theatre, taking our time to enjoy some of the sights like the

CN Tower lit in blue, and all the stars along Canada’s Walk of Fame. Everyone enjoyed the performance with some dancing in their seats at one point. They both really liked the music, and spending time together.

After a great night’s sleep and a yummy breakfast at the hotel we were on our way home, stopping at Pebbles for the lunch buffet. Both Gary and Shawn are looking forward to going on another trip, and highly recommend going to see “Come From Away”.



## New Houses Increase Access

By Gareth Lloyd

Our Association takes all of our core values seriously — not least that of community inclusion, and as such we support people based upon concepts of preferences, opportunities and choices. In recent months we have seen five men across two households relocate from a semi-rural setting outside of Owen Sound to centrally located,

established neighbourhoods within city limits, close to community resources. For many people we support, access to the good things in life can change depending on where they reside and, if too geographically isolated, may lead to a feeling of mental as well as physical separation from typical, valued life.

Even in a few short months since the moves we have seen new relationships start to

develop, with people being able to access bus stops, parks, and stores close to their homes, which means there is a reduced reliance on staff for transit. Of course, living in town isn’t for everyone, but for the men in question it has provided a greater amount of independence and autonomy that will hopefully continue to develop as they grow into their new home and new neighbourhood.

## Bob Has ‘Touched the Hearts of Many People’

Continued from front

favourite memory, Bob said it occurred when he first began his journey with us. He recalled the time when a young woman was reluctant to participate. He shared that for the first two weeks she only sat and watched. The third week, Bob said he encouraged her to work alongside him and together they constructed her first birdhouse. Bob shared that upon completion, she was so excited she asked if she could take the birdhouse home. She told him she wanted to show her Dad because he’d told her she couldn’t do it.

Bob shared, “It’s amazing to see the improvements in people just by offering a helping hand.”

I’ve had the privilege to watch Bob over the years as he’s come alongside people. I’ve listened to the words of encouragement he’s given when someone’s become frustrated and I’ve listened to and meditated on the words of wisdom he’s imparted to individuals who’ve shared about a life challenge they’ve been experiencing.

Bob’s a remarkable man and the journey with him is one myself and others will never forget. I can put it best

by saying, “Bob, thank you for being a significant part of our life. It’s been an honour working alongside you over the years. You have touched the hearts of many people and you’ve been an incredible blessing to each and every one of us. We will miss you, Bob. It’s been a fantastic journey. We wish you and your wife the best in the next chapter of your life!”

So next time you’re out driving along the back roads and come across some brightly coloured bee boxes and birdhouses, chances are Bob and the woodworking groups have built them!

●●●●●●●● **NOTICE** ●●●●●●●●

**66th Annual General Meeting 2020 has been postponed to a later date (to be announced).**

# 'We Are Listening to the Concerns'

*Continued from front*

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed a lot for our teams. We are most familiar with home visiting and child care centre support with families, where we have the opportunities to see firsthand the successes and challenges the children are going through. We are accustomed to facing each day with travel, a welcoming face upon our arrival, and a conversation with families

financially, emotionally, and physically exhausted. We are hearing parents who are feeling the stress of having little ones at home, managing schoolwork for siblings, or not having a childcare routine to fill young minds and have them rest well at night. Instead of being present physically, our teams have provided phone conversations

families who are also stuck in the undertow can stand up long enough for a breath together with us.

These waters that are moving quickly and forever changing during daily conversations of safety, health and wellness, and social isolation, have us all fighting to find ways to just breathe again. And one day soon,

...nothing will compare to the feeling when we are visiting again...

we will find ourselves in the slow ripples again, where children can see friendly faces

and professionals about how we can best support them in their lives. We spend time reflecting on concerns, providing suggestions for activities, and then hope for a smile or a high five from our little ones to end the visit.

And now we are hitting the bottom ground in these turbulent waters. Without safe home visiting options for at-risk infants and children, and child care centres closed around the province, the waters have turned again. We have hit the sandbar so many times, being pulled by the undertow where we can't see for ourselves the growth in development.

We are listening to the concerns of families who are

about updates on what has dynamically changed for families, and secretly wished we could have seen those first steps too, heard those new sounds, or played that colour-matching game for the eighth time. We have participated in video chats, been planning for September school entry for year one students, and supporting therapy suggestions from other professionals, while wondering will the schools be ready in September, are we understanding the full picture of what needs to happen with this little one?

Our team sends emails, handouts, craft ideas, mental health resources, financial resources, hoping that

again, learn from peers and professionals, and we can hopefully share a smile and a high five with all the sweet little faces we have missed during these times.

To quote an unknown source I found circulating on Facebook, "We isolate ourselves so that when we get back together, no one is missing." I am aware of what our children's services team feels we are missing too. But nothing will compare to the feeling when we are visiting again, being welcomed into a space where families, professionals and children are ALL present, healthy, and happy to see us.

And when it is safe to do so, I may even ask for a hug.



## Kids Love the Muffins!

*Submitted by Cathy Foster, Fely Clarke, Jason Karn and Steven Ransom*

Every Wednesday, and on the occasional Thursday, the mouth-watering smell of banana muffins baking wafts through the halls at the main office of Community Living Owen Sound and District. For several years different volunteers have gathered to bake mini-muffins for local schools to be used in their Breakfast Club programs. Initially, the baking was done for Sydenham Community School, however since the closure of that school the focus has shifted to preparing muffins for Hillcrest Elementary School in Owen Sound. Hillcrest has been involved for the last three years.

Over the years, many different volunteers have been involved in this program. Currently, the volunteers are Jason Karn, Steven Ransom and Fely Clarke. Jason has been very dedicated to this

cause since 2018 and is enthusiastic about the process each week. On any given week during the school year, these dedicated people bake 100 mini-muffins for the children. These muffins have always been nut-free and baked with a touch of cinnamon. Fely keeps a careful list of the supplies required on a regular basis to be able to bake the muffins and a volunteer from Hillcrest Elementary School delivers the ingredients.

Once the muffins are baked, they are picked up by another volunteer from Hillcrest and delivered to the school. It has been reported that the kids love muffin day at the Breakfast Clubs and they very much appreciate the efforts of the baking volunteers. Jason feels that baking for children is a good cause and he is very proud to continue this work.

Thank you for helping to provide a delicious breakfast option for kids in our community!

## Employment Workshops Build Skills

Individuals who are interested in having a job attend a series of six weeks of employment workshops on "How to Shine as a New Employee". I facilitate the weekly hour-long workshops focusing on what it means to be a great employee. We discuss a wide variety of topics. Everything from the importance of personal hygiene, how to dress appropriately for work, being a team player, satisfying employer expectations to how not to get fired. As the weeks go on and people become more comfortable, we delve into more serious topics such

as learning from our mistakes, dealing with our emotions and balancing life and work.

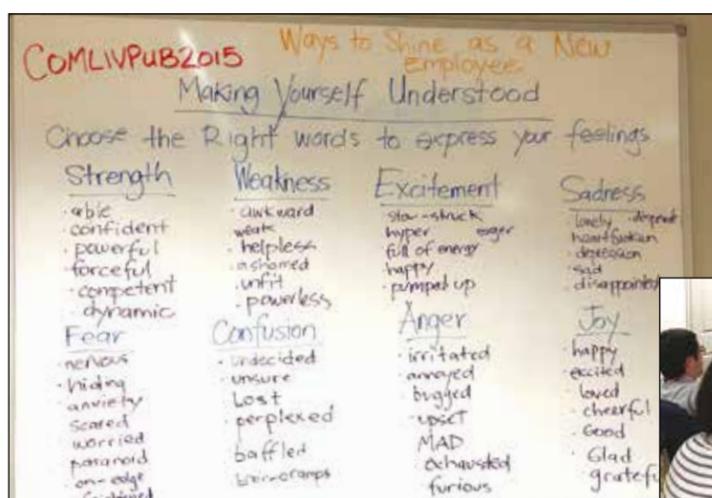
As a tool for excelling in our jobs, these workshops connect us to the true power and influence that we all wield in our workplaces. It encourages us to bring all that we are to our work lives. They also teach people strategic advice on how to manage conflict and change.

Workshops are an effective way for me to get to know a person which then allows me to create a better employment opportunity for them.

Attending these workshops

and learning the skills to be an employee who shines increases the likelihood of success on the job.

*If you are interested in employment and would like to sign up to ODSP Employment Supports please contact Kim McCorkindale, job developer by phone at (226) 664-0789 ext. 457 or by email at kmccorkindale@comlivos.on.ca*



## Passport Opens New Doors

*Submitted by Marsha Alexander*

Last summer, Martin Kurr volunteered at Grey Roots Museum and learned the trade of blacksmithing which he discovered a passion for. Luckily this year, with the help of Passport dollars, he was able to continue developing this passion at Forty Hills Forge, near Mildmay. Martin signed up for six, two-hour classes where he has been working on many projects, such as a barbecue steak turner, handcrafted metal leaves, a fire poker and more. Martin cannot contain his happiness and desire to learn more at this cherished craft, and looks

up to his mentor Brian Clowes with much respect. Martin plans to continue learning this amazing trade and hopes to one day have his own forge.



# A Positive Change

By Tim Garrod

Five years ago, I found out that after a long wait, I would be receiving support through Community Living. Immediately, the changes in my life began, starting with a successful goal to find my biological mother and discover my medical history.



Due to having the right support and knowing that someone was there to back me up, my confidence and ability to stand up for myself got stronger, and is now at the point where I can advocate for

others in addition to myself. I am a member of the Bruce Shoreline Advocates, which led me to join the Accessibility Advisory Committee of Saugeen Shores, where I continue to advocate for equal opportunity for all. I now regularly volunteer at the library, and this past fall, began my first paid employment working at the fire hall.

My friends circle has grown, thus increasing my family of the heart, by joining 2nd Avenue groups, being connected with Supported Choices for trips and local activities, and being confident enough to join the Special Olympics bowling team. I am significantly more connected to my community now than I was before I had the support through Community Living.

If you are someone who is still waiting to receive support, hold fast — when the change comes, it will be a positive one. Once you get the support, it makes a world of difference.

## Collecting 'Food for Love'

Submitted by Alisha Bowles

It has been a wonderful start to 2020 for the Sound Advocates, full of big plans and ideas.

One big idea that was super successful was a challenge sent out to two other local advocate groups: Bruce Shoreline in Port Elgin and The Action Committee in Walkerton. Our

goal was a one-week challenge to collect as many canned goods for our local food drives and Safe n' Sound Owen Sound as possible. We called this event "Food for Love" as it ran the week of Valentine's Day. There was great support for this initiative with many items being brought in and collected. All three advocate groups did really well collecting over five boxes of canned goods, toiletries and hygiene products. We are excited to come together as advocates near and far to support our communities.



## Whimsy Family Paint Event

Submitted by Cathy Foster. On Saturday March 7, families came together to create Easter gnome paintings at the Whimsy Studio in Owen Sound. Nikki facilitated the event which included a small but happy crew as they listened to music and created their masterpieces. An enjoyable time was had by all that attended, as reflected in the pictures taken at the event (above). Thank you to the families that participated in the event!

## 'Back to the Future' of Community Living

In 1996, the following story was written and featured in the spring edition of Perspectives, Volume 18. It was written by one of our staff members, Rebecca Hilt, to reflect thoughts and hopes for Community Living Owen Sound and District in the year 2020.

As a society, we have not fully come as far as Rebecca had hoped, but we have come leaps and bounds. Community Living Owen Sound and District continues to provide person-centered supports in our community and always aspires to improve. We hope you enjoy this post from a past edition. Thank you Rebecca!

*Community Living Owen Sound and District in the Year 2020 — A story by Rebecca Hilt*

*It doesn't exist. Community Living Owen Sound and District has become a faded memory, a part of history — not because of government cutbacks or because new types of agencies or organizations have developed, but because it worked itself out of existence.*

*Community Living Owen Sound and District did its job. How did it happen? Well, it is a long story...*

*Back in 1995 Community Living Owen Sound and District was in the process of making changes and a new attitude started to take hold within the organization. This attitude was hard to describe or put your finger on, but it was there and it started to grow. Staff became more conscientious about empowering the people they worked with and they became good at following the leads of the people as well. It became second nature to staff not to make judgements or to not assert their power over the people they worked with. Soon all kinds of people were living their lives at their own pace.*

*Before long, staff started spreading the attitude to other members of the community. They used language that represented the new attitude whenever they were in meetings with other people. Phrases like "Our way of doing things is..." or "that family should..." were no longer heard. Position titles were rarely used any more because titles promoted*

*the power of "the system" rather than promoting the rights and decisions of families and people. Staff also offered awareness sessions to groups of professionals so that they too started to become more conscientious about the attitude they portrayed to people they came in contact with. Universities and colleges got on the band wagon and they offered courses to future doctors, social workers, police officers, etc. in attitude training. Soon the whole community became better supporters of each other. People no longer viewed Community Living Owen Sound and District as the place to go to get supports. In fact, supports were happening in many ways, with many different people. Everyone was working together and the word "community" really meant something.*

*So, here it is the year of 2020 and Community Living Owen Sound and District is in the history books as one of those "models" that was used a quarter of a century ago when people used to think "surfing" the InterNet was the wave of the future — but that's another story.*

### PERSPECTIVES PURPOSE:

*Perspectives promotes acceptance of people with different abilities in our community. We celebrate successes and embrace new ideas, approaches and opportunities.*

#### Editorial Team:

Lorraine St. Germain, Cathy Foster, Vicki Reevey and Heather Thomson

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*We encourage readers to use the newsletter for new ideas, contacts, websites and resources. Perspectives welcomes comments, contributions of articles or questions.*

[www.communitylivingowensound.com](http://www.communitylivingowensound.com)

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*Association Membership applications are available from our office.*