



PERSPECTIVES

The Newsletter for Community Living Owen Sound & District



THEN & NOW: FRIENDS FOREVER

By Colleen McNabb

Jenn and Barrett have grown up together and know each other from the time they were little children. They went through school together starting in elementary school and then high school, and now they enjoy each other's company as adults. Jenn and Barrett have shared many special moments together, including: many shared dances, lunch dates, trips to Story Book Park, and many other activities in between. Recently, Jenn and Barrett had the opportunity to recreate an old photo from their childhood at Story Book Park. If you know Jenn and Barrett, you know that they are inseparable when they are together, always sharing a smile and holding hands everywhere they go. Here's to many more years of friendship to come!

CAROL SUE AND HER HEADMOUSE

By Carol Sue Meneray and Vicki Reevey

If you were to stop by Alexandra Community School on a Monday morning you would no doubt see Carol Sue Meneray hard at work in the library using her assistive technology to get her job done. Carol Sue has volunteered at the school since the fall of 2015 helping to set students up in the library computer system and to input books into the system as well.

When Carol Sue was in high school in 1987, she was a co-op student and worked at Hillcrest School for several years. Once she was finished school, they did not want her to leave so she stayed on to continue helping them out.

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CAROL SUE..... CONTINUED

By Carol Sue Meneray and Vicki Reevey



She did her job so well that she was asked to spend some time in the library at Dufferin School as well. It was there she met Sherry Moore and became friends.

One evening in 2015 Carol Sue returned home and had an email from Sherry, who had moved to Alexandra Community School, that said "HELP!". There was an overloaded cart of books that needed attention and she knew who could do it. Carol Sue to the rescue. Carol Sue has been volunteering there ever since.

Today, Carol Sue uses assistive technology, purchased using her Passport funding, in the form of a HeadMouse to help her be more efficient. A HeadMouse replaces the standard computer mouse for people who cannot use or who have limited use of their hands. It works like a traditional mouse with the mouse pointer being controlled by head movement allowing hands-free use. Carol Sue wears a dot on her forehead that controls what she is doing on the computer. With the assistance of her support worker, she can better input books as well as check books out for students. Carol Sue says her assistive technology allows her to "do TWICE the work that I could do before and now I don't have to take breaks anymore".

Staci Marck, Principal at Alexandra Community School, says in regards to Carol Sue that it is "important to see the inclusivity and ableness that she displays". She had nothing but praise for the work Carol Sue does and says that Carol Sue showed great perseverance and patience working with the IT department to get the software to work with her HeadMouse. Marck is grateful for the "service she [Carol Sue] provides selflessly", stating that "she asks nothing in return". She believes it is important for the children at the school to see Carol Sue arrive every Monday like clockwork, to see her do the "important job" that she does and to show them that she is self sufficient and "in charge". Marck says "we are privileged to have her at our school".

Carol Sue enjoys her job and is proud of the work she has done and continues to do in the library. She wants people to know that even though you may be in a wheelchair you can still do a job. She says she loves everything that she does at the school, and she calls it "CS friendly". Carol Sue says she loves "that the staff see me as an equal and when they want something they will ask me and NOT go through my helpers to ask". Carol Sue continues to use her HeadMouse each Monday and ensures the library at Alexandra Community School is kept in order. The staff and the children are lucky to have such a hardworking and dedicated volunteer at their school. Outstanding job Carol Sue!

COMMUNITY ART AT THE LINK

Community Living Owen Sound and District would like to sincerely thank Whimsy by Nikki for the donation of a beautiful painting now hanging in our Link location. Nikki painted a bare tree on a very colourful background. Then, during an open house for the Art Walk in Owen Sound, Nikki welcomed every person from the community who visited her studio to add the leaves to the tree. "My intent was to donate the painting to a not for profit and when I gave it I thought I concluded that Community Living was a nice match because it was working together with members of the community that completed the painting. It has a nice theme of community and togetherness."

Thank you, Nikki! This painting will make a wonderful addition to our downtown location.



REFLECTIONS & CONNECTIONS: CELEBRATING LEANNE

By Cathy Foster & Leanne Hopkins



A short time ago, I had the pleasure of sitting down with Leanne Hopkins to discuss her work and her career as she prepares to retire from her role as Manager of Child and Family Services at Community Living Owen Sound and District. Many words come to mind when you think of Leanne; supportive leader, honorable, fierce advocate, compassionate and knowledgeable to name a few. But over the course of her more than 35-year long career supporting children and families, collaboration and mentoring has also been a huge focus of her work.

Leanne studied at Brock University and returned to the Grey-Bruce area during the summers where she worked providing Special Services at Home for a young child. This was in the initial stages of the SSAH program and Leanne provided these services for a few years. After Leanne had finished her post-secondary education and completed her Degree in Developmental Psychology, she worked with this family as they were looking for a supported daycare placement for their child who was transitioning to school that fall. In collaboration with local professionals, the family and Leanne arranged for a child care placement with additional support being provided for the child. One of the first arrangements of this type in the community. Leanne also worked with the Youth Employment Services in an outcome driven project from the Ministry of College, Universities and Trades.

The program, which included vocational assessments and working with young offenders to fulfill community service work orders, was successful because good relationships with local business owners who believed in giving kids a second chance were formed. It was through this work that Leanne became interested in assessments and working to uncover attributes and strengths in people.

Leanne then began working with Infant and Child Development Services for Community Living Owen Sound and District. Historically, this program started with a proposal to the Ministry of Community and Social Services to acquire funding to run a pilot with some medical and community partners in support of the home visiting model for very high-risk infants. Leanne worked alongside colleagues including other Infant Development, Pre School Resource and Family Support Workers in the beginning years of these programs. Leanne shared that the biggest influence for her during this time was a training event that focused on enabling and empowering families as it allowed for an understanding of the family focus and not just a child centered view in the work. The training encouraged staff to broaden the scope of their work towards empowering families by providing information, resources and experiences to build confidence in parents and caregivers—a true collaborative effort. After working in this capacity for three years, Leanne was offered the position of Manager in 1991.

In 2012, Family Support Services was added to her portfolio. Leanne has continued to work diligently towards building quality programs in Child and Family Services throughout her career.

Along her journey, Leanne has also made time for collaboration and mentoring with community partners on projects. She shared that she feels that by working on collaborative projects with other providers in different sectors, opportunities to influence champions in other systems are created.

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CELEBRATING LEANNE...CONTINUED

Through the years, she has actively looked for opportunities to expand programs and influence advancing inclusion by working and learning together with others. "Everyone here is a life changer and can change lives in a small way, and I enjoy the energy that is created in working with colleagues and coworkers who are inspired by actions that make a positive difference." Leanne has been a partner spearheading local initiatives such as Let's Grow, Cradlelink and the Parental Mutual Aid Sites. Many of these programs continue operating today and housed locally through Keystone Child, Youth and Family Services and Public Health. Leanne also participated in advocating for formalizing a process of coordinated services with the school boards to develop programs such as Let's Learn (registration for kindergarten for all children a year in advance of attending), Getting Ready for School and formalizing a protocol for Early Planning Meetings for children beginning kindergarten. The work focused on collaborating with school boards to explain importance of early identification of support needs for children and early planning to meet those needs. The Let's Learn effort of all participating partners through the years has resulted in approximately 300 children and their parent receiving assistance and ushered into planning processes with schools who would have otherwise not been identified. "The children that we support are the hardest working kids at school. It's important that we ensure children have good self-esteem and feel worthy regardless of the wide scope of support needs that they may have. If you view children as working hard trying to regulate themselves, and using energy keeping behavior in check and working hard to contribute, you see the whole child through a different lens."



Over the years there have been many system changes at both the workplace and ministry levels. Regardless of how things have changed, Leanne has always been a strong proponent of parallel process. "The best resources we have here are our employees; I support them to be able to support our families." Leanne feels that every person can be a leader with the work that they do and the attributes that they bring to the job. Leadership is not about a title. "When you look at something, it can always be reframed by giving it a ¼ turn". These words ring true with the way that Leanne has led her teams over the years. She has always empowered her staff to be able to support families to navigate real life scenario's with compassion, understanding and respect. She has been a remarkable and integral part of the team who has always been willing to pull up her sleeves and work alongside others to help ideas come to life and expand the work that is done. Through her dedicated years of working with children and families, Leanne has met every challenge with grace, strength and a drive to help others succeed. We would like to sincerely thank you for your inspiring work!

Leanne is looking forward to be able to devote time to some of the other passions in her life: her family and her horses, competitive carriage driving, equine assisted learning, photography and tending to her perennial gardens. All the best in this new chapter, Leanne.



SPECIAL OLYMPICS SILVER MEDAL WINS

By Martin Soder & Marsha Alexander

From February 26th to March 3rd, 2024, Martin Soder represented Team Ontario at the Special Olympics in Calgary, leaving an indelible mark with his remarkable performance in five-pin bowling. Despite facing initial challenges in fundraising for his trip, Martin not only surpassed his goal but also clinched two silver medals, showcasing his dedication and talent.

Departing from the London Airport, Martin and his team enjoyed a smooth journey to and from Calgary, where he not only excelled in bowling but also explored iconic landmarks such as the Calgary Tower and the Calgary Flames Saddle Dome. Despite battling a neck injury, Martin's resilience shone through as he delivered outstanding performances on the lanes.

Upon returning home to Owen Sound, Martin received a warm welcome from the community, including the Fire Department, Police Department, and cheering fans. His inspiring journey was highlighted by local media, with Martin sharing his story of triumph, encapsulating his experience with the phrase "Conquered Calgary."



Martin with Special Olympics Coach Norma

Martin's journey serves as a beacon of inspiration, reminding us to always strive for our dreams and goals. Through his achievements, he not only brought glory to Team Ontario but also embodied the spirit of the Special Olympics, inspiring countless individuals to pursue greatness with unwavering determination.

ONE WORLD FESTIVAL
COLOURING OUR FUTURE
Celebrating Diversity & Inclusion in Grey Bruce

Bienvenue à tous
Добро пожаловать
Tere tulestan
Kilimwili
Kilimwili

A colorful poster for the One World Festival. At the top, it says "ONE WORLD FESTIVAL" in red and "COLOURING OUR FUTURE" in orange. Below that, it says "Celebrating Diversity & Inclusion in Grey Bruce". The main part of the poster features five horizontal crayons in red, orange, yellow, green, and blue. Each crayon has a label in a different language: "Bienvenue à tous" (French), "Добро пожаловать" (Russian), "Tere tulestan" (Finnish), "Kilimwili" (Swahili), and "Kilimwili" (Swahili). The background is a gradient of yellow and orange.

ONE WORLD FESTIVAL IS JUNE 19TH!

The One World Festival is happening again this year! Join the fun on on June 19th from 9am to 2pm at the Owen Sound Farmer's Market!

ACTIVITIES AT THE LINK

By Marsha Alexander



This winter, The Link by the Shore and The Link at 2nd Ave, joined forces and worked together building a few masterpieces in the Woodworking Group. Carpenter Bud Halpin taught the group how to build a toolbox, as well as use a scroll saw to cut out individual Valentine's projects. To finish off the session, the group created rolling plant stands from start to finish! Many new skills were learned and participants spent time making their projects unique with wood burning, painting and Dremel art.



OLYMPIC DREAMS

Congratulations are in order for a couple of fine athletes from Community Living Owen Sound and District. TJ Robinson and Curtis Button won Silver Medals in the Snowshoe Relay Race at an Ontario Special Olympics Regional Competition. TJ and Curtis were part of the "Arctic Foxes" team that took part in the event held at Horseshoe Valley Resort on February 24th. Good Work Gentlemen.

