

60 YEARS OF GROWING AND CHANGING

1955 – 2015

The history of My School and Venture Training began before 1955. In 1953 there was an initiative to start a residential school in Vernon. Although several organizations donated money to this end, plans fell through and in 1954 some of these organizations wanted to withdraw their support and apply funds to something more viable.

1955 The beginning of a realization of the dream began. On February 21, 1955 the first meeting of a newly formed association was held. An executive was named and several bylaws were adopted. Mr. Stuart Fraser was chosen as the first president and his hard work and dedication set the stage for those who were to follow. This Association was to become the governing body of the emerging school.

On June 21, 1955 a school was born! Classes were held in the Golden Age Clubrooms east of 30th Street on 34th Ave. Three students attended the school and Mrs. Owen Hooper became the first teacher. These students assumed ownership of the school and referred to it as “*MY SCHOOL*”.



Thus, the school was christened and became an integral part of the lives of the many students who were to follow.

In September classes opened in the basement of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, on 28th Street. The pupils paid a \$5.00 per month fee to attend.

Later in September a Society was incorporated and became known as the *VERNON AND DISTRICT ASSOCIATION FOR RETARDED CHILDREN*.

1956-1957 A change in venue for the new school saw it move to the rooms above the Music Centre on Barnard Ave. The government gave the Association a grant of \$250/per pupil per year for operating

expenses. This funding was supplemented by monies raised through donations, bake sales and enrollment fees which were raised to \$10.00/student per month.

Later in the year, the school was on the move again. This time to Gateby Manor on the corner of 30th Street and 33rd Ave. This building was cold in the winter and space was limited. However, it did have a playground for the children. Mrs. Kay Peters was appointed as an instructor. She made sure the fires were lit and there was warm soup for the children when they arrived. Here it stayed until the Women's Institute Hall was donated to the cause and was moved to a site on the Anglican Church property. This move was not, at first, well received by the neighbours but was supported by the City Council. The costs incurred to establish the first permanent home for the school came from supportive service clubs who helped in moving the building and renovating it for the use of the students. A huge TV Bingo was held in the arena to supplement the funding.

While the construction and renovating of the school building was ongoing, classes were held in the Parish Hall of the Anglican Church. Mrs. Pearl Hooper resigned in 1956 and Kay Peters was named head teacher with Mrs. Marjorie Donovan as her assistant.

1958 The work was finally completed and the school was ready for the anxious students to adopt as their new home. It was officially opened on February 13 and soon became an integral part of the community. It met the needs of these students until 1961. Mrs. Peggy Zemla was hired as head teacher in January of 1958 and Kay Peters was her assistant.

1959 The Public School Act was amended to allow local school boards to assume responsibility for the education and training of moderately handicapped students. Thus the door was opened to again make changes so that a larger population could receive the benefits of attending a facility that was dedicated to meeting their specific needs.



1960 Exciting news!! The Vernon School Board donated a site on the eastern end of the West Vernon School property for the construction of a new school for handicapped students in the Vernon area. Two thirds of the cost of construction was the Ministry's responsibility and one third of the \$29,000 cost was the Association's share.



1961 The new “MY SCHOOL” was opened on October 21, 1961. The hard work of the Vernon Association aided by various service clubs and volunteers was realized. The school became a cornerstone for a new philosophy for educating all students, 18 years or under, under the direction of the Ministry of Education.

With the completion of the new school, the Ministry of Education had fulfilled its obligation, but there was now a large group of clients older than 18 years with no place to go. Once again the Association with President Aubrey Reed was called upon to address this problem. Miss Edna Oram, a pioneer advocate for this population, proposed opening a sheltered workshop to meet this urgent need. She, along with her hard working committee, established Vernon's first sheltered workshop for some very appreciative clients.

1962 Just as with the school, a variety of places would be used until a permanent home could be located for the workshop. The first site was in a vacant house on 35th Street under the guidance of Mrs. Ford and was attended by four trainees. The workshop was named VENTURE by Mr. A. C. Wormull. The shortened version of the name stood for, VERNON'S ENDEAVOUR (TO) NUTURE, TRAIN

(AND) UTILIZE RETARDED EMPLOYABLES. It also signified venturing out into a new and better life.

Funding for this new endeavour was scarce. Many options had to be used including the sale of goods and services, enrollment fees, teas and rummage and bake sales; a lot of hard work by many willing hands.

In September of 1963, Alice Howsam took over as a manager and remained in that position for the next 13 years. By 1964, ten trainees were attending Venture. There was a need to start planning for larger premises.

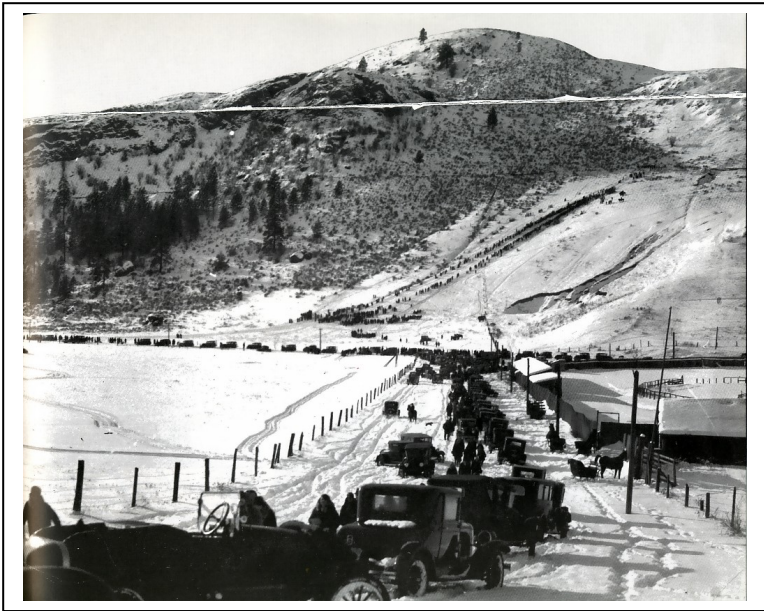
Meanwhile, school activities at My School continued and Dorothy Alexander was named to the staff to assist Peggy Zemla in providing academics, and life skills training for the students. Physical exercise was also given a strong focus.



1965 The enrollment at My School had increased to 18 students and there were now 14 trainees at Venture.

Once again the Association was in the business of constructing facilities for its “family”. A new building to house Venture was needed and the Association hired Mr. Huggins, a local architect to design the plans and Mr. Brandt to build the Centre on its current site on Old Kamloops Road. The Kinsmen Club along with other interested individuals donated \$40,000 towards the new building. The Lions Club also donated equipment for the new building.

1966 Under the guidance of President Mr. Jack Arrand, the Venture Training Centre Building – known as “Kinsmen House” was officially opened on February 21, 1966. It now served 23 trainees. This would not have happened except for the dedication of the Vernon Kinsmen Club. They donated the land, provided the financial backing, materials, muscle and guidance. Without their support, the facility would not exist. The Association and the citizens of Vernon will always be in their debt.



Edna Oram, the drive behind the concept, retired from the Venture committee and was recognized for her work in seeing her vision realized. Alice Howsam became the new director. Trainees were busy learning to use power tools, developing woodworking skills, advancing their practical living and academic skills under June Simms and learning the rudiments of cooking in the Home Ed. Lab. Physical fitness activities and social events rounded out a very full and productive program. Bishop Sovereign, a strong support of Venture, referred to it as “the High School of My School”.

A balanced program was also being offered at My School under the direction of Dorothy Alexander, the newly appointed Head Teacher. Eighteen students in 3 classes enjoyed in-school daily classes supplemented with swimming, skating, bowling and gym activities. Teachers, Paul McGregor and Mrs. R. Bean, assisted by faithful volunteers, Isobel MacKenzie and Fern Stutsky, provided excellent instruction and guidance to these students.

A move to a new building where the plans for providing training opportunities could be realized was great news for Venture trainees. Some trainees were involved in using power tools to make pallets while others were learning basic cooking skills and practical living

academic skills. Contracts for the Centre included the making of pallets, bottle sorting, making Christmas corsages and Winter Carnival decorations, fringing mats, finishing wall hangings, stuffing envelopes and making up special orders of party materials, toys and educational materials. The physical fitness component of their program was carried on through programs at the Recreational Centre. Social skills were a very large part of all the programs that the trainees were involved in.

1967 My School was operating very well under their new format. Mrs. B. McNaughton had the senior class busy learning practical skills that would be excellent training for their transition into Venture. Miss Pat Fraser became the teacher for the primary students and throughout the school program there was an emphasis on teaching language skills. New programs were undertaken and their success was reflected in the student's enthusiasm for learning.

To ensure that the students were receiving the best curriculum opportunities, Dr. McGann from U.B.C. was asked to survey the program and offer his suggestions for improvement. He was very pleased with the balanced program that was being offered and no changes were made but the staff was very aware that monitoring needed to be ongoing to make sure that the top level of learning and development continued.

Venture had many visitors this year and all were pleased at the level of training being offered at the Centre. Business was up and new staff was hired to accommodate the growing needs of the trainees.

Social events were a very important part of the clients' overall training. Mrs. Tessier's boarding home residents were invited to join their Christmas party. Social skills and language development were practiced in natural situations and the trainees looked forward to these events. Another very popular program was the formation of a choir group under the direction of Mrs. J. Blankley.

Recreational opportunities continued with bowling and swimming now being regular events. Some of the trainees participated in the Annual District Bowling Tournament.

1969 The list of activities and contracts for Venture trainees continued to increase and the attendees were kept busy and happy at the various tasks. Mrs. Simms and Mrs. Mellows continued to give academic support to the trainees and Mr. E. H. Rogers assisted the trainees with their swimming skills.

Recreational activities continued with birthday parties, bowling parties and a very successful Christmas party being the highlight. Trainees were also the guests at the Figure Skating Ice Revue and the Christmas Pantomime put on by the Vernon Little Theater. Summers were busy with many attending Camp Winfield and as guests at the Stecyk summer home on Okanagan Lake.

At My School, things were changing. A program to integrate some students into appropriate programs at West Vernon began. Five students began taking P.E. classes at West Vernon while three students from West Vernon began receiving special assistance at My School.

Three students began receiving assistance from Mrs. McEachern from the Okanagan Neurological Association on a regular basis.

Mrs. McNaughton tried to retire from the staff of My School but was recalled when Mrs. Mooney was forced by illness to leave the school.

As an outcome of a recreational meeting in Vancouver, Miss Alexander and the staff at the Rec Centre worked hard to put together a recreational program for the summer months. Unfortunately, attendance was not forthcoming and the program was dropped.

High school students and student nurses attended My School to further their knowledge and skills in working with students with special needs. Volunteers were used to implement an Auditory Training Program set up by Miss D. Deakin, the speech therapist for the South Okanagan. Mrs. Lemiski put their language skills to use during her weekly music lessons.

The children enjoyed many holiday parties as well as the B.C. Hydro Christmas party and Mrs. Lemiski's and Mrs. Follis' beach party. They also attended theatre events and the Ice Revue. They worked

hard to prepare a float for the Carnival Parade and placed third in their category.

Recreation was not forgotten. All of the usual activities continued with the highlight being an overnight trip to Kamloops for 19 students for a bowling tournament. Practices for the now annual March for the Retarded resulted in seven students and two staff completing the entire route.

The need for an activity room addition to My School was becoming very evident and board members and School Board representatives met to discuss what this would involve. However, the provincial government had put a freeze on building additions of this nature and so the plans had to be set aside, but remained foremost in the plans of the Association.



1970 Many marching steps taken by supportive members of the community paid off! There was enough money to begin construction of a gym for My School. The construction began in late August and was completed at the end of October. Both My School and the Association made good use of this valuable new space.

Classes continued at the school with the children divided into 3 groups. Group 1 learned beginning reading and math skills with Mrs. Price assisting Miss Alexander. Group 2 was busy learning reading and math readiness skills. Both groups learned handicraft skills and economic usefulness skills as well as advanced self care under the guidance of Mrs. McNaughton. The little ones in Miss Fraser's class practiced physical development skills, body awareness and body usefulness skills. Activities were designed to teach the students how to work and play together. Throughout all of the programs, language development continued to be of prime importance.

Recreation activities and community involvement programs continued to round out a very busy program for all of the students.

Venture was always on the lookout for more and varied activities in which to involve their trainees. It was amazing to see how involved they were in the community through the various contracts they held. They were so busy that a need for increasing work space and improving working conditions was becoming a very important consideration. To date, air conditioning on the main floor and a dust collection system in the workshop on the lower floor had improved the working conditions considerably as well as addressing safety and health concerns. These improvements were made possible through donations received from the March for the Retarded. Thanks again to community support!

Plans for an addition to Venture were underway and the initial excavating and pouring of footings had been completed with plans to continue again in the spring.

1971 – My School now had 30 students in attendance. New approaches to their education were tried and their program was expanded. The older students worked on the construction of a playhouse and tree house. They also learned the skills necessary to deliver hundreds of flyers. As well as their academic skills, the students became involved in simple cooking and cleaning, handicraft classes and art and music periods. Self care and safety were an integral part of all these programs.

Recreational activities, which involved much time and effort, provided the students with valuable “into the community” experience. Various special events held during the year emphasized the importance of moving the students outside of the student environment and into the large community environment. Five students along with Miss Alexander and Mr. Ken Mickey from the Rec Centre traveled to Toronto to attend the Special Olympics for the Retarded. In swimming, Smokey Wilson from Venture received a gold medal, the only gold medal earned by a B.C. competitor, and Jesse Novak from My School earned a bronze medal. Other students involved in various activities were Lily You, Leonard Evenson and Tony Merrick. Again, it was only through the support and encouragement of the community that this event was possible.

Perhaps the most exciting happening of this year was the beginning of the Gym Dandy Club. This club was sought as a recreational outlet for retarded adults in the community. It was to provide an opportunity for them to plan, operate and finance their own activities with guidance, encouragement and direction provided by advisors when needed. A variety of activities were planned by the elected executive. In October the group began bowling every Friday evening. The individual captains collected the fees from their team members. The opportunity to be independent was a very valuable outcome of the program. Wednesday night programs also began. This group became known as, Our Club.



Venture had a very, very busy year. They began their Rustic Furniture program under the direction of Mr. R. Harley and trainees had the opportunity to learn quality woodworking skills as well as safety procedures necessary in work of this kind. Mrs. O. Ingram supervised laundry workers and directed the

making of decorations for various local functions. Mr. R. Wilson capably called on local businesses and prospective customers to gain new and varied contracts for the trainees. Bottle sorting was still huge for the trainees and they took great pride in their job. Within the Centre, ceramics and weaving were added to the extracurricular activities.

Academic training continued and a valuable part of the program was assistance in banking skills. Trainees learned how to bank and to save for something of importance to them and how to manage their payday earnings.

The recently formed Brownie and Cub groups were actively earning badges and participating in integrated activities with other groups in the community. They participated in the Winter Carnival Ice Stampede as well as in a floor hockey challenge from the 6th Vernon Pack.

Another new program in the community, the Carefree Program, which began last year, was still operating each Friday morning at

Reeve Hall from 9:00 to Noon. It currently served 7 handicapped persons from 2 years to 22 years. Using the Lions Club “Multi Mobile”, the clients and their one to one helpers traveled to different locales to picnic, swim or just sightsee. The Kinette Club helped to financially support this valuable new program.

1972 My School became a part of School District #22 which alleviated the Association from the financial responsibility of running the school. However, they still were involved in supporting social and extracurricular activities as well as the transportation of students to school.

My School students attended a Provincial Track Meet in Victoria and received a trophy for the most outstanding performance. This honour was achieved against schools with a much greater enrollment.

Many extracurricular activities occurred during the year and a camp at Mable Lake was enjoyed by all that attended. Also some students attended the summer camp at Camp Grafton in Salmon Arm. The year ended with the children singing and acting in a musical production of “Little Red Riding Hood”.

My School has been referred to as one of the finest schools for the retarded in this province, a commendation of which the Association can justly be proud.

Venture was growing again and a new section was added to accommodate the Rustic Furniture and toy departments. Fifty trainees attended the Centre. A new program “Training Unlimited” was organized to give individualized training to non-productive



people with the aim of broadening their horizons and increasing their skills. Many clients gained skills and confidence through this program. Training in weaving was provided to another group of trainees by Mrs. B.J. Sworder. The other programs that involved Venture trainees on a regular basis were filled to capacity. Mrs. Howsam provided assistance to Armstrong in setting up their Kindale

facility. Also, during this year, Venture became “motorized” when they received a Variety Club van and a one ton flat deck truck.

Recreational and social activities continued throughout the year with camping opportunities at the Easter Seal Camp in Winfield and Camp Grafton in Salmon Arm available to the trainees. Academic training with Mrs. Simms was still very popular with the trainees and they worked hard to succeed with each new task.

1973 A new venture for the Association was its goal to obtain a residence for six to eight handicapped people. The goal was nearly reached but had to be put aside until a future date.

The resignation of Mrs. McNaughton from My School paved the way for the hiring of Mr. Tom Elliot. Many new programs came into use under the new school board umbrella. Students eagerly explored the new materials made available to them.

A winter track meet at Tillicum Valley was a new recreational opportunity for the students. Swimming, bowling, skating, track practice, baseball and floor hockey games against a Salmon Arm team, participating in the March and the Provincial Track Meet in Victoria demonstrated the ongoing emphasis on physical fitness at the school. Also the students were guests at various concerts and plays at other schools in the district.

Each year gets busier than the preceding year at Venture. The buildings received a facelift with some cleanup and grounds improvements made. A new store downtown was rented as a retail outlet for Venture Christmas items.

Five Venture trainees and Mrs. Ingram went on an exchange trip to Regina. They were royally treated as were the guests that visited Vernon. Social events occurred regularly throughout the year and board and card games were a regular social event during the lunch breaks. Trainees went to Mission Snowbound and Ron Chinn won the Good Sportsmanship Award and the trophy for the highest group score went to Venture Training.

Fees for trainees were once again visited, but due to government regulations, they were not charged.

1974 My School now enrolled 37 students and had two new teachers, Mrs. S. Munk and Mrs. J. Lockhart. Miss Fraser left the school in June. As well, the staff was supported by Mrs. D. Walton, a child care worker, and volunteers, Mrs. Mae Dunkley and Kathy Derry. All of the students received a well rounded program designed to meet their individual needs. They continued to participate in community and recreational events. The school also worked cooperatively with the Alexander Children's Wing at the hospital and six of their children regularly attended the school.

The biggest event of the year was the trip for 20 students and 11 chaperones to attend the Special Olympics in Winnipeg. The trip was made possible through the generosity of the citizens of Vernon and the Association's support.



Three people from the hospital Extended Care Unit also attended Venture. LIP grants allowed for extra assistance with the initiation of the Extended Training Program. The grant financed a much needed speech therapy program for many Venture individuals.

Of particular note was that some trainees were fitted into regular employment in the community. Also, some paintings from Venture were sent to Special Olympics in Winnipeg and three of them won 1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes.

The Association gave thought to establishing residences to provide homelike surroundings for institutionalized clients and for short stay respite opportunities for others. This idea would be revisited in the future.

Venture trainees and staff also participated in Operation Trackshoes in Victoria. It was the first big trip for many of them.

1975 Some staffing changes again occurred at My School. Mr. Elliot left at the end of June and Mr. P. Mergens replaced him until December. Two teacher aids were sought to assist the remaining three teachers. A special class for autistic children was established with teacher Mrs. Munk assisted by Mrs. Walton.

A ski program at Tillicum Valley was set up and 13 students happily enjoyed this new experience. Students also participated in the Bed Race during Winter Carnival. They did well, the bed did not!

Another first was the trip to the Pumpkin Patch in Armstrong. It took a long time for every student to choose just the right pumpkin and then each student, with assistance, carved their chosen pumpkin.

This was a year for firsts. But the ultimate first was an exchange trip to Fullerton, California. Twenty-three My School students and 12 supervisors were joined by 3 students and 1 supervisor from Revelstoke on the memorable trip.

Venture had a year of contrasts. Some programs and activities were able to continue but others had to be dropped due to lack of funds. Notable among these were the academic classes and the Home Management Training Program. However, under the leadership of Mrs. Gardiner, an apartment was set up and 3 men moved in to attempt independent living. Normalization brought some freedoms but it also demanded accountability, lessons soon learned by these men.

Renovations and changes were made at Venture to allow for greater efficiency in the work environment. Funds for many of these projects came from the March for the Retarded. This year, Kenny McLean and his family led the march.

Venture trainees, along with peers from Rainbow Ranch, joined My School students on the ski hill. The program was a great success and would be continued again next year once the funding was in place. Many other young adults participated in a square dancing program. The Gym Dandy Club continued to operate well and its functions were well attended.

1976 – Through the years, the Association had worked hard to support a school, a training centre and more recently, independent living opportunities for those in need in this community. 1976 saw it turn another page in this support. It now had children from Okanagan Neurological Association attending preschool classes four mornings a week at the Venture Training site. It also voted to turn over some of the proceeds from the March to ONA. The name for the March was changed to “The March for the Handicapped”.

My School now had 41 students in attendance and Alix Inglis and Don Young joined the staff as teacher assistants. Added to the list of recreational activities that had been ongoing was snowshoeing. An overnight trip to Revelstoke provided great fun in the snow for all. A trip to the Armstrong Fair and later a Penny Carnival were events enjoyed by all. The Snow White play at Christmas was a huge success.

At Venture, a big change occurred. Mrs. Howsam left for Ghana and Mr. Hugh Allison replaced her late in the year. A LIP grant allowed the building of a storage shed. The furniture department expanded into making commercial furniture for hotels, motels and restaurants. It also began making office furniture.

Good news! Under the Adult Education branch of Okanagan College, the Basic Education and Home Management courses were reinstated.

1977 The My School staff changed again with the addition of teacher Helen Donovan and aids Joan Reardon and Wayne Brown. Mrs. Price, Mrs. Walton and Don Young left the staff during the year.

Regular extracurricular activities continued. A new adventure occurred when the staff and students journeyed to Surrey for their Drama Festival. They placed first on the night that they performed “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs”. What a great experience! During July, 8 students were joined by 20 trainees from Venture to attend a one week experience at Camp Kopji. Mrs. Ingram, assisted by Miss Alexander and Mrs. Munk, directed the camp.

Three autistic children received one to one programming under Miss Alexander and supporting staff.

The school could not forget the valuable assistance of full time volunteer, Mrs. Kay Peters. With her extra pair of eyes and hands, more programs could be implemented.

Venture Training had a year of tremendous advancement. Two Canada Works grants were received and many aspects of their programs expanded. A new carpentry area was constructed under a Local Initiatives program assisted by a large donation from Hudac. Landscaping was done under a Young Canada Works grant and new equipment was bought to increase the efficiency of the training facilities. However, President Gary Hobelman felt that Venture went through a change that was too fast and too drastic for some members to support.

Independent living for some Venture men continued as two new members moved out into the community.

1978 Of real importance to Venture was the Provincial Task Force that was struck to examine the role of sheltered workshops. The grant to Venture was increased but not to the expected level.

The March was held again along a new route and proceeds were shared with N.O.N.A. Because of stringent financial obligations, this was the last year that the joint March occurred.

Hugh Allison resigned as workshop manager and Claudette Everitt was hired to replace him. New goals needed to be structured to guide Venture through some very turbulent times.

The Tea and Bazaar Committee continued to support many aspects of both the school and Venture. They purchased needed equipment for both and supported the My School Ski Program.

School classes continue every morning from 8:30 to 11:30 under the sponsorship of the Adult Education Department of Okanagan College. The Home Management classes provide goodies for coffee breaks and homemade soup for lunch. Homemaking skills were learned and practiced with good nutrition, planning and careful buying being an integral part of the program as well.

Thirty-nine students were enrolled at My School. Rosemary Burris replaced Helen Donovan on the teaching staff. Academic and recreational activities provided a balanced program for all.

Staff members were involved in a workshop on autism held at the school. This helped significantly in setting up a classroom for autistic students. Sharon Ramsdale assisted on a volunteer basis with this class under the direction of Dorothy Alexander and aided by Wayne Brown.

An evaluation of the school program was undertaken by Bob Poutt from U.B.C. and many of his suggestions were implemented. A Review Committee met each month to discuss the programs of individual students with the child's parents or foster parents, and other concerned professional workers present.

1979 The March for the Handicapped raised enough funds to be able to assist the Association in discharging a large debt caused by the failure of a furniture contract. Venture could now look to the future and re-establish itself in the community. Claudette Everitt resigned as manager and Grant Timlick agreed to act as Interim Manager. Many very needy problems in and around the building itself needed to be addressed and professional help was sought to complete them.

Though many changes were necessary, the programs at Venture continued to thrive and trainees were kept busy in all departments. Also the Gym Dandy Bowling and Our Club activities proved very popular with the people attending the various functions.

An official statement of criteria for the operation of My School was adopted by the School Board. Programs continued to supply a wide variety of experiences for all of the students.

This year, five students attended the West Vernon Kindergarten along with Mrs. Munk. As well, four senior students attended a regular cooking class at Fulton Junior Secondary along with a teacher from the school. These integrated experiences proved beneficial to the My School students as well as to those in the integrated classrooms.

Parents and staff benefited from two workshops held during the year. One was centered on Down's Syndrome and the other on autism. As well, the students, along with the staff, learned sign language to assist communication with the non-verbal students. Miss Alexander attended a workshop on developing IEP's and Joan Reardon attended a Mark Gold workshop entitled "Try Another Way".

1980 Venture regrettably lost Joe Brown as Manager due to ill health. Brian Kelly took over as the new manager. The financial problems that plagued Venture for the past year or two now seemed to be under control. A \$50,000 B.C. Lotteries Grant helped to build a spray booth and to upgrade the fire alarm system, the lighting, and the dust collection system. Valued funds from the March continued to support these ongoing needs. A 30' x 60' lumber storage building was constructed at the north end of the outside carpenter shop.

Valuable practical living skills were being practiced in all programs as the philosophy of the Association was to make all of its attendees prepared as much as possible to fit into work and social opportunities available in the community.

Susan Bremner moved from Venture to My School to replace Rosemary Burris. Jane Eason was hired to work with the autistic students. Lynda Freayn, Sharon Ramsdale, and Joy Davies were the most recent teacher assistants hired by the board.

Adding to the number of integrated students in local schools were the senior boys who attended a woodworking class at Fulton. Some students were also enrolled in a Work Experience program under Mr. Al Goldie and sponsored by the Vernon School District.

1981 Brian Kelly attended some very important conferences that dealt with some very controversial subjects. Also, he discovered that the programs offered at Venture compared very favourably with those all across the country. One such program was the Community Living Support Program funded through Human Resources.

A People First chapter was established in Vernon. It received committed support from the Association as it provided an effective voice for the Association's clients.

Venture received a complete overhaul of its building and equipment. They were assisted by various community groups, the Kiwanis Breakfast Club, the Sheet Metal Workers Union and Ron Brown Ltd. Materials, labour and expertise provided by these groups was invaluable.

A Life Skills Training Program for independent living began with 13 trainees participating.

The March for the Retarded was not as profitable as it had been in the past and thoughts for its future were considered.

Integration initiatives continued at My School. Four students and Mrs. Munk attended the kindergarten at West Vernon, four other students were integrated into West Vernon classes on a half time basis. Three senior students and Miss Alexander attended woodworking classes at Fulton and one student was enrolled in the Work Experience program.

Programs and social opportunities continued to provide a sense of belonging to the “larger community” for My School students.

1982 The Association adopted a new name “Vernon and District Association for the Mentally Handicapped”.

All of the upgrades at Venture were completed and proper maintenance of these upgrades was stipulated as a condition of the Lottery donation.

Residences to provide integration into the community remained a priority. The beginning steps proved successful and created a need to build upon them. The upgrading classes moved to Okanagan College, another integrated step, one that required assistance in providing transportation to the college site.

However, financial concerns limited program opportunities for more severely disabled clients and this lack needed to be addressed.

The Community Support Service program directed by Don Robbie provided a wide range of services to 11 clients. As well, they advocated for good medical and dental care. Meeting the basic needs of housing, health, hygiene and nutrition were the utmost concerns of their program.

The goal of the March, or Walkathon, as it was now known, was to provide much needed funds to assist in moving mentally handicapped people into independent living situations. Assistance with providing furniture, cooking, utensils and helping with moving costs were considered. Unfortunately, this was to be the last Walkathon to be held by the Association.

Forty-one students now attended My School and all participated in a wide variety of activities. One of the new events that 5 students participated in was the Fred Dietrick Swim Meet in New Westminster. They came home with a number of medals. Others participated in the Special Olympics in Kamloops, the Penticton Track Meet, and Operation Trackshoes in Victoria.

Integration in BX and Alexis Park kindergartens as well as others at West Vernon School enlarged the scope of the integration program. Integration into neighbourhood schools was the philosophy behind this expansion.

The addition of 2 new classrooms and the renovation of another to provide a space for the speech pathologist to work were almost complete.

1983 Venture consolidated and yet remained innovative. The lines of waterbeds increased and were sold directly to the retailer in hopes of establishing good working relationships and financial security. Unfortunately the Wometco bottling plant was threatening closure thus putting 80 workers out of work. A need to find space for these workers had to be planned for. A federal government NEEDS grant of \$27,000 was received to assist Venture with property improvements.

The college program was in danger of pulling its funds unless there was a demonstrated need for the courses offered. A committee was formed to address the problem.

Seventeen individuals were now living independently. Over 3 years, 25 clients received support from this program. Also a downtown location for the program was secured thus separating the Venture and community programs which were different from each other.

The integration programs at My School extended into more grade levels at the four accommodating local schools. In addition, two students moved to attend full time at the basic Education program at Kalamalka Secondary.

An evening “Roast” was held at the school in February to honour Dorothy Alexander for her 25 years of service to the school. Many good memories were shared.

1984 This year welcomed back to Vernon 13 new residents from Tranquille. They lived in four neighbourhood homes. Many took advantage of the programs offered at Venture.

Although it was a “year of constraint”, several new pieces of equipment were purchased and a 30’ x 40’ shed was constructed to store waterbeds awaiting distribution to customers in B.C., Alberta, and Saskatchewan.

Winter Carnival and Christmas craft items added to the success of the wedding supply business. Also the closure of Wometco had not yet come about although its future was not at all certain. Two former client/workers were now working full-time in the community.

The Walkathon did not materialize and the financial support from the GAME VERNON project was less than the Association counted on. Other fund raising events also fell short of their expectations. Charity funding was difficult in the tighter economic times, but still very necessary to Venture’s success.

My School took another giant step. A class of seven of the more academic students moved on to Silver Star with Emily Fraser to complete their elementary school education.

Jean Lockhart was the guest of honour at a dinner at O'Keefe Ranch to celebrate her 20 years of working with handicapped children. She began working in Armstrong and then came to Vernon to join the My School staff.

Staff and students worked on a float for Winter Carnival, an annual event for the school, and placed second. The school continued to provide these events along with a very balanced training program. The students enjoyed their time spent at school.

The Education Committee of the Association supported, and worked towards educating the public on the need for understanding the particular problems faced when special needs students are integrated into the mainstream. They worked toward generating support for a primary age resource room similar to the Silver Star model.

1985 Venture undertook the sponsorship of weekly bingo nights at Dabbers.

They were very successful and helped to put the Association on a firm footing again. Some needed repairs and renovations were made possible. Members also assisted with the United Way Bingo night at Schubert Centre. This added \$1,000 to the working budget.

The Association office moved downtown with the aim of consolidating all of the other Association programs under one coordinator.

A 30th Anniversary party for the Association was held at Venture. Many original members of the group attended.

At the request of concerned parents and caregivers, the board sponsored a workshop on Human Sexuality. A follow-up lecture series for mentally handicapped men and women was scheduled for later on.

Financial problems occurred when a waterbed customer's business failed and left the Centre \$23,000 short. The Centre was forced to reduce expenditures to try to help with the shortfall. Other programs, the bottle depot and the design program continued to be successful.

An Advocacy and Influencing Committee was formed to assist clients with communication when someone was having difficulty expressing his/her feelings or opinions or assisting that person to speak on his/her own behalf.

The move from My School to a Resource Room at Hillview for seven more students and Mrs. Alexander took place in September. This left 27 students at My School to participate in an Environments First program. There were four areas to the program and the students were taught specific skills pertinent to managing within that particular program area. The usual extracurricular activities continued to round out their very balanced program.

1986 The Association continued to work to complete the very necessary upgrades to Venture with help from funds generated by bingo. It was still the aim of the Association, with assistance from Human Resources, to establish an activity centre for multiply handicapped people in the community. A qualitative program, focused on training rather than production, was the goal.

The Self Help Skills program was busy providing information and opportunities for clients to discuss various topics of concern to them. Guest speakers at their meetings provided valuable assistance. There were now 11 students attending My School from the hospital unit. Communication remained a top priority for these students and others with augmentative methods being used to support oral communication.

A garage sale was held to raise funds to travel to Victoria, along with the Resource Room students from Hillview and Silver Star schools to Operation Trackshoes. Estate funds from Winifred Freeman assisted with the expenses.

1987 This was definitely a year of change for Venture. The Wometco Bottling contract ended when the plant closed and Brian

Kelly, Executive Director of Venture, left his position. Once again Grant Timlick stepped in to act as interim manager. Mr. Fred Thomson was hired in September to fill the vacant position.

A home for four “medically fragile” individuals was under construction. It was being built with the assistance of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Social Services. Families of these individuals were given an opportunity to become actively involved in the planning.

A Supported Work Program was initiated by the Association with the hope that it would expand in the future.

It was also a year of great change at My School. Three Resource Rooms now existed in School District #22 and plans were underway for the accommodation of the remaining 21 students at My School to move into the system by the end of June, 1988. Dorothy Alexander was instrumental in planning for this move but it meant an end to a job she had enjoyed for twenty-five and a half years. The move reflected changing attitudes in education and a growing awareness that handicapped students could be educated with their peers and that both groups would benefit from the opportunity.



1988 This was a year of opening and closings. The 39th Street Home was officially opened on September 10, 1988 and the final closing of My School occurred in June. Integration was a reality. The now former My School was renamed “*Dorothy Alexander*

Centre” in recognition of all her hard work and devotion to the handicapped over the years.

The Supported Work Program at Venture officially commenced. It was to become a very valuable alternative for some Venture attendees.

1989 A Mission Statement for the Association was now ready to be displayed in the office so that everyone had a clear understanding of the aims and goals of the Association in providing programs for its clients.

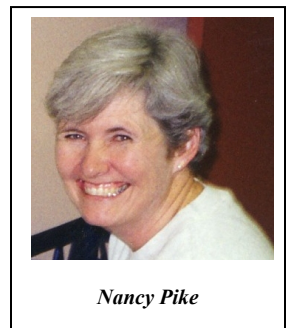
The new lease for My School was signed. Some minor structural changes were made to the Association’s portion of the building.

A half duplex was purchased and then leased to three adult members. It provided them with the opportunity for independence. It was hoped that other housing opportunities would follow for future clients.

The Fenton case, heard in the B.C. Supreme Court, caused great confusion for the management of sheltered workshops. Board members were forced to examine how its implications would affect Venture.

Twelve people from Venture were now working in the community under the Supported Work Program.

Nancy Pike became Assistance Executive Director to act for Fred Thomson when he was out of town or otherwise unavailable. This assured that there was always someone available to meet the increasing needs of the Centre.



Marianne Crowley headed a very active Self Advocacy group. The group prospered from their opportunities to express their ideas and

feelings. The feelings of self-worth and self-esteem were enhanced.

A Family Support Program, with financial assistance from the Ministry of Social Services, offered support to 40 families and proved to be one of the best programs that the Association offered to parents.

A new truck was purchased to assist Venture with their ongoing programs.



1990 – 1991 The Association purchased a lot for the future construction of the 26th Street Residence. This move extended its commitment to providing residential facilities for needy clients. They also purchased half of a duplex to provide additional independent living accommodation for more trainees.

The downtown offices of the Association became inadequate and a plan to relocate in order to house the staff of Supported Work, Wings and Family Support Programs under the same roof was expedient.

1991 was a busy year for the Association acting on behalf of many individuals and organizations in the community. Funding for the various programs that were the shared responsibility of many interlocking agencies was a very exacting job, one that required patience and cooperation.

Mr. Fred Thomson resigned from his position as General Manager and Nancy Pike accepted the responsibility, first on an interim basis, and then on a permanent basis in July, 1991.

Improved service delivery was needed and negotiations with the Ministries of Social Services and Health were ongoing to create a shared plan that would provide services to those clients that were not productive but still required Life Skills training and Day Programs.

The new 26th Street Home came online under the chairmanship of Tony Ramsdale. It provided a home for four gentlemen with 24 hour supervision.

The Association also hosted a very successful B.C.A.C.L. Conference under the direction of Tony Ramsdale and Nancy Pike.

Funding support in the schools for educating special needs children had been cut and this issue was addressed by Mr. Linemayr through meetings with government and by creating public awareness of the problem. He worked in conjunction with B.C.A.C.L. to address the problem.

The program for reclaiming and fixing lost and stolen bikes was begun. It provided work and training for 5 clients. Also, the Recycling program was a valued contract received by the workers. It gave a specific job to a variety of clients which provided opportunities for the development of self-esteem for the workers and a valuable service to the whole community.

A Self Advocacy project funded by the Secretary of State allowed a group of participants to travel on a four city tour to dramatize their view of their lives in the community.

1992 The Association, after years of being many things to many people, became an organization whose service delivery was client centered. It now balanced productivity with meeting individual training needs.

Funding for the individual programs came via the various Ministries, Canadian Job Strategies and the North Okanagan Regional District.

Additional funds were secured through Bingo and the Cash Calendar program.

The Association celebrated Stuart Fraser's 90th Birthday. Although the goals of the Association had changed over the years since his first term in office, the dedication to providing the needs of the handicapped remained foremost in planning for the future. This was not an easy task and the challenges that faced the board members and staff of the various programs became more complex.

The issue of the School District diverting Special Education funds into General Revenue was an ongoing problem for the Education Committee.

The Wedding Department moved from Venture to a downtown location and in doing so changed its name to *All Occasions by Venture*. The lost and stolen bike program also moved. It relocated to Kal Lake Road and was aptly named, *Recycle Cycle*.

1993 Venture operated at full capacity with a store, a furniture business and a day program. The latter program provided a place for those who no longer wanted to work, those who were more senior in years, and those unable to work for safety reasons. Venture also began a lath program that provided funds but needed to be monitored to make sure that the clients could participate and the program still be productive.

Residential care was provided for 10 people who had high medical needs. They resided in three homes operated by the Association. Independent living and ongoing advocacy continued. B.C. Housing bought a duplex which was administered by the Association.

The Recycle Cycle shop moved again, this time to the Alpine Centre. Also the Community Access Program placed 14 clients in individual placements at minimum wage or more and gained 7 contracts at minimum wage or more.

Some problems occurred in the furniture department as the clients had difficulty keeping up with the demand for their product. The workers

were aging and not able to work as efficiently as in the past. The Venture van had the same problem. It too was getting old.

1994 New lath program equipment was ordered to assure efficiency in the program. The monies for this purchase had to be borrowed which placed an additional financial strain on the Association.

The Association withdrew its membership from B.C.A.C.L. due to a philosophical difference and the cost of belonging to that organization. This move came after much deliberation.

Recycle Cycle changed its name to *Cycle Cycle*. It now represented several different lines of new bikes.

1995 The Association turned 40 this year. The occasion was celebrated in October. Many former presidents, board members and staff attended.

The furniture making equipment was sold to the local Canadian Mental Health Association. The installation of the new saw was slower than predicted. Unfortunately, when all was in place, the biggest customer for the product had decided to use another type of product. New markets and products needed to be found. The retail operations found the marketplace very tight. Money was scarce and buyers were cautious about spending what they had.

From the original few that Miss Oram took under her wing, forty years later, the Association was now responsible for clients:

| | |
|--------------------------|----|
| Working in the community | 14 |
| All Occasions by Venture | 18 |
| Woodworking | 25 |
| Day Program | 46 |
| Cycle Cycle | 6 |
| Community Access | 46 |
| Recycling | 11 |
| Group Residences | 10 |
| Number of staff | 92 |

1996 The financial stress felt over the past few years continued. There was a definite fear of the need to restructure some of the existing programs. There were a number of students graduating from high school that could not be accommodated at Venture due to lack of room.

The New Employment Standards Act created the potential for extreme difficulties for the Association and its programs. However, hard work by a dedicated group overcame the odds and achieved a resolution that became the guide for other groups in the province to use.

The Woodworking shop had to be closed and subsequently restructured. Custom cutting on order was a viable option. Twenty-five clients from this program were placed in a new day program downtown called *Venture Uptown*.

The bike business was moved back to Venture for financial reasons. New bikes were no longer part of the program. The program could not support the need for a large and varied inventory. Government restructuring rumours abounded and put real stress on the board to make sure that they continued to remain client focused even under adversity.

1997 Government reorganization caused great concern for the board. The uncertainty of what might happen made decisions difficult. In preparation for uncertain change, the Venture Training property and building were transferred into the North Okanagan Foundation for the Mentally Handicapped. This foundation was set up by V.D.A.M.H. to hold the assets of the organization.

The newly restructured Woodworking Program was back on track and able to pay off the bank debt for the cost of equipment. All of the other programs functioned well even under the stress of an uncertain political situation. Group homes and Day Programs continued to provide excellent care for those they served.

As with other things this year, the Bingo monies were uncertain due to changes in the Bingo payouts. The government wanted to direct

more gaming monies into the general revenue. The Board fought this trend along with others in a provincial network. Bingo was the prime source of charitable income for the Association.

1998 Again a year of concern for the Association. Contract Reform, Restructuring and Wage parity were the main areas of concern. Many hours of negotiation led to a lawsuit being filed against CSSEA and PSEC citing the unfair practice of giving wage increases only to unionized agencies.

With decreased government funding, there was a need to plan for more self-reliant fundraising projects to continue to fund the valuable programs that the Association provided.

Community businesses, services and service clubs provided much assistance to the Association. Their help kept the Association on track. Through the goodwill and assistance of Tolko, the loan on the saw was paid off.

1999 Goals for the Association were reviewed to maintain a focus on the aims of the Association. Contracts needed to be monitored, sound financial planning maintained to assure continued programs to clients and provision for continuing advocacy for clients, families, caregivers and staff needed to continue.

The resignation of Nancy Pike was accepted with regret. She would be missed at the provincial level as well as locally. She retired with confidence that the Association would find new and creative ways to solve many of the problems that it faced and that all of those in need of service would find an equal opportunity to access the opportunities now available through the Association.

Contract dollar rollbacks necessitated changes and cuts to some programs. Still the staff and board worked together to provide excellent service to their clients. There remained a long waiting list for people who needed service but financial restraints limited the opportunity to decrease that number. This was a problem that needed to be creatively addressed.

The lawsuit instigated last year did not make it to court. Also, the vote to unionize the BCGEU passed with a very small margin. Many of those eligible to vote did not do so because they felt they were not suitably informed of all of the ramifications of the vote. All in all, 1999 was a very political year for the Association.

2000 The beginning of a new century and the welcoming of Carol Schaad as the new Executive Director of the Association. She came well qualified to accept the new challenges she would face.

Unionization of staff, program coordinators and residential persons in charge was not an easy process. It required good faith on behalf of all those involved. Eventually a collective agreement was signed.

Reorganization within the agency became necessary because of unionization. These changes allowed for flexibility in the distribution of duties within the staff. It was not an easy time for everyone but, in the end, clarity of aim and focus on the clients prevailed.

The Accounting Director's office was moved to the People Place and the Executive Director's office was moved to Venture. This allowed for more efficiency from both.

Bingo revenues brought \$63,060 to the Association and in turn assisted in the funding for All Occasions, Life Skills and Venture Day Program. Faithful volunteers make the Day Program successful.



2001 Klaus Linemayr took Carol Schaad's dream for renovating Venture, inside and out, upstairs and downstairs, and made it a reality.

Very generous donations of materials and labour from over fifty companies and businesses made this massive change possible.

Craig Carter was hired as Assistant Executive Director as Carol Schaad went on medical leave. Others took over her responsibilities effecting a smooth transition. Dorothy Alexander became Acting Executive Director in her absence.

And the financial worries continued. It was estimated that a claw back of between \$500,000 and \$600,000 would happen by the year 2003/2004.

In cooperation with Okanagan College, planning was initiated for a college program at Venture to accommodate special needs students leaving school who did not meet the college entry criteria. Also being discussed was perhaps the opportunity for clients at Venture to have access to college programs as many of them did not have that opportunity when they left school.

Accreditation preparations were being initiated. Updating files and evaluations of staff and supervisors began. Eventually, accountability in all areas of Venture's programs would be effectively assured.

The Cycle Cycle shop moved to the Quonset hut and operated two days a week. They were able to get a contract from Zellers to assemble new bikes. In the off times, workers moved to the wood shop and the Blue Bag Recycling program.

The Woodworking Program continued to make lath, survey stakes and picnic tables. They are supported by the goodwill of businesses in the community. Pallet making is a new project for the workers and orders are on tap for next year as well.

The Recycling Program relocated from Venture to a building leased from B.C. Hydro. Recyclables from Enderby and Spallumcheen are sorted by 25 participants. Canadian Waste supports this program by donating transportation costs to Kelowna for sorted materials.

Supported Work Programs continue to grow but individual job placements in the community were not easily attained. The multi-tasking of some of the opportunities was challenging for many of the

workers. However, group contracts continue to provide valuable experiences for groups of supervised workers.

Lunches for 281 students were prepared by 12 clients and supervised by 2 staff at The Place. This contract provided valuable opportunities and some social interaction opportunities for these clients on their down time.

All Occasions and Venture Day Programs collectively served about 80 clients who were actively involved in all the various aspects of their programs.

2002 The name of the Association was changed from the Vernon and District Association for the Mentally Handicapped to Vernon and District Association for Community Living. The new name gave a focus to what the Association was aiming to do.

The downtown shop of All Occasions Flower and Wedding Gift Shop was closed and its operation was moved to Venture. The Accounting offices moved to Venture as did the School Lunch Program. All of these moves were made possible due to the upgrades made at Venture. They saved the Association rental monies for downtown space. The Venture Uptown program also moved to the former April House at the Anglican Church.

Restructuring of some group homes allowed the Association to save considerable monies and allowed for flexibility in planning for the 17% cash cutbacks. Program dollars were also affected and changes had to be made to provide a new Advanced Centre for Training to address the needs of clients transitioning out of the school system thereby addressing the wait list for services.

Bingo proceeds allowed the purchase of computers to monitor clients' progress and needs and to upgrade the casual call-in process, etc. They also allowed for the necessary upgrading of vehicles. The Woodworking area at Venture and the ACT Program at the Alpine Centre received needed renovations using funds left over from the group home restructuring.

Issues with the BCGEU and the Board of CSSEA took many hours of the Board's time. Accreditation also was very time consuming but staff worked hard towards accomplishing this task.

For medical reasons, Carol Schaad was unable to return to her position as Executive Director and Neil Belanger was hired to take over her duties. Dorothy Alexander was thanked for her efforts in providing leadership during Carol's absence.

The Blue Bag Recycling Program moved again. They are now situated at the Belkin Paper Recycling Plant just south of Vernon. Revenues from this program go toward client honorariums. The program partnered with Canadian Mental Health in an office paper sorting arrangement.

The Supported Work Program continued to search for both group and individual contracts and owe a vote of thanks to Vernon and District businesses. The pruning contract from Riverside Forest Products was not renewed because the company was forced to cut this program. However, overall the program had a very successful year.

The Greenhouse Project was a new program for Venture. It was designed to be a place where clients from the Day Program could visit and work with the plants for their own enjoyment.

2003 The challenges that the Board has faced in the past still exist. Many hours were spent in negotiation with government agencies to assure some influence over the direction the New Authority would take.



The Advanced Centre for Training Program (ACT) operated under Coordinator Eileen Howells assisted by Trista Hejslet and Gordon Winters was operating with 45 individuals taking advantage of this new service. Many young people coming out of school could now transition into this valuable program.

A new program, “*Dinner Tonight*” was undertaken in cooperation with community partners. Ingredients for a meal for four were packaged and subsequently sold for a cost of \$3.00 per meal. The Cycle Cycle building was completely renovated and insulated to provide a warm workspace for this program.



It was necessary to provide additional security for the main building and outside areas of Venture. This move significantly reduced the number of break-ins and damage to this site.

Venture developed a new VDACL logo, mission statement, and vision statement. This renewed focus was all part of the ongoing preparation for the accreditation of VDACL. All policies, procedures and standardized practices of the Association were undergoing careful scrutiny to make sure that they reflected the aims of the Association.

Upgrades to the computerized system as well as the vehicles, equipment, and accounting program occurred during the year.

2003 was not an easy year for VDACL. Along with the financial cuts of the past three years it was once again hit with financial hardship. The continued success of VDACL’s programs under these restraints was due to the supreme effort of board members to fight to protect the services they provide.

2004 The Association reaffirmed the direction that it wanted to take and in doing so it was felt the Executive Director’s position had to be re-evaluated. Neil Belanger left the position at the end of the year and once again Dorothy Alexander stepped in and carried the responsibility until a new director could be appointed.

During the year, there was much work done on the Board’s behalf. There were meetings attended by President Klaus Linemayr to keep abreast of the changes that the new Interim Authority would make

that would affect services happily worked at Cycle Cycle, Woodworking, Recycling, Day Program, Supported Work and the Lunch Program. The ACT Program built on the successes experienced in their first year and planning, assured a full program for the future. As well the Life Skills Program provided flexible support to help participants reach their individual outcomes. Participating in community events gave a wider focus for client programs and development. Venture Uptown continued to provide a wide variety of activities for about 47 attendees. In the past, this program focused mainly on recreation, leisure, and sports but through the efforts of accreditation, a new and improved program design was planned.

Venture still relied heavily on proceeds from Bingo to support its efforts. This year, a new fund raising project was tried. The Festival of Trees and Art Auction at the Prestige Inn was an enjoyable night for all those that attended. A hard working committee undertook this project and gathered support from the community for decorated trees, silent auction items, an auctioneer, and entertainment. VDACL donated many art pieces for the auction.

2005 In February, Eileen Howells was appointed the new Executive Director. She faced some very difficult tasks this year. Much uncertainty had to be endured during the birth of the new Community Living Authority (CLBC). These were difficult times for Association members.

In order to be a CLBC funded service provider, organizations such as ours, now needed to attain CARF (Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities) accreditation. Accreditation assists service providers to improve the quality of their services and meet internationally recognized standards, as well as signals a service provider's commitment to continually improving services, encouraging feedback, and serving the community. The Association was awarded a three year certification, the highest Carf accreditation possible. This was in no small part due to the hard work and commitment of staff and managers. The Association was recognized for the high quality of service that we provide and given exemplary ratings in several service areas.

Three long time employees left VDACL this year. Gerri Armstrong from Accounting left after 25 years of service and Barb Bradley and Jim Douglas left for new opportunities after 18 and 16 years respectively.

Early in the year, we saw the Venture Day Program reorganize to offer more choices and variety to participants, resulting in a more challenging and rewarding environment for individuals attending the program.

The Association was saddened with the passing of two individuals this year. In May, we suffered the loss of Paul Marlatt. Paul lived at 26th Street residence for the past three years. His gentle spirit and engaging smile will be missed by all. In June, we lost Walter Fedick. Walter was our most senior participant with the longest history at VDACL. He will be missed by both staff and participants.

The employment programs saw an increase in the number of contracts this year. The programs continued to offer individuals an opportunity to enhance skills, build self esteem and work in friendly and supportive environments. Staff continuously looks for new opportunities to expand the program and increase our community partnerships.



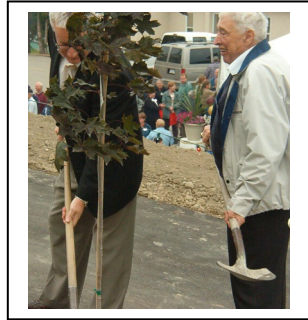
In June of this year, the Foundation (NOFMH) purchased a property on 27th Avenue for our ACT and Lifeskills Programs. The building was large enough for us to include three suites for a supported living program. In November, Lifeskills

moved into the lower level with construction still underway on the addition of the upper level to accommodate the ACT Program. A special "Thank you" to Klaus Linemayr for heading up the project! ACT staff and participants eagerly awaited their move in date!

Strategic Planning, Participant Advisory and Fund Raising Committees have been struck and they, along with Occupational Health and Safety, Joint Labour Management, Finance, and Policy and Procedures Committees, assure that the ongoing functioning of

VDACL continues with participants, parents and staff being part of a team approach to management.

The year marks a milestone for the Association. On September 30, 2005 a BBQ was held with over 300 people attending to help us celebrate our 50th Anniversary! The event provided an opportunity to truly celebrate along with present and past students, participants, staff, community members, service club members and the Association Board Members who have all contributed to the success of both My School and VDACL. Without their foresight, dedication, and hard work this celebration would not be possible. As part of the celebration, Rick Mowles, CEO of Community Living BC, officially opened the Memorial Garden – “The Garden of Reflection” and planted a tree to celebrate the event.



2006 This year saw many changes in the way we do business. The transformations that have taken place within our services have left many “catching their breath” or “scratching their head”. It was a confusing year for us and for individuals and families as we continued to navigate our way through all the changes, new terminology and the changes in the way we do business.

February saw Klaus Linemayr, President; Dorothy Alexander, Past President and Eileen Howells, Executive Director, visiting Alberta to gain insight into the direction CLBC was moving with individualized services for our participants. The trip proved to be informative with visits to the Blue Heron Association in Barrhead, St. Paul Abilities Network in St. Albert and the Alberta Community Living Association in Edmonton.

In March, there was the ratification and signing of the new Collective Agreement with the BCGEU. The agreement, expiring in 2010, created a more stabilized working environment. However, like most community living agencies in BC, we began to see a problem with recruiting qualified staff. This is as problem that we envision continuing for several years to come. A CSSEA (Community Social

Services Employers' Association) panel was set up to address this issue across BC. CSSEA is a leader in Human Resources and Labour Relations and a trusted advisor to our membership and government for the community social services sector of British Columbia.

March also saw us renewing our service contracts with Community Living BC. New outcome measurements were identified that tied in with established program and participant outcomes. We continued to develop our working relationship with the new authority and to improve services provided to individuals.

The completion of the 27th Avenue building saw three residents supported in Independent Living through the Lifeskills – BASICS Program. The ACT Program moved into the upper level and Gord Winters was promoted to the ACT Program Coordinator. The success of this endeavour was entirely the result of the hard work and dedication of the staff.

In August, we hosted our annual Celebration Day at the DA Centre. The theme this year was “Under the Big Top”. Participants, staff, volunteers, Board Members, the Mayor and community groups attended the event. A great day was had by all!

Camp Hurlburt provided 51 participants with the opportunity to spend a week away from home. Camp Hurlburt is always greatly enjoyed by all participants who attend.

The Therapeutic Work Programs, providing work to 85 participants, had another challenging year. Cycle Cycle donated more than 100 bikes and miscellaneous parts to “*Bicycles for Humanity*” destined for Africa to assist people with transportation needs. Woodworking saw increased contracts this year and staff and participants have had to improvise to keep up with the added workload. The Blue Bag Sorting Program experienced a 10% volume increase this year. The Glass Recycling contract with the RDNO was in its third year with volumes increasing 15% over last year! The Lunch Program was currently providing an average of 200 bag lunches per day for West Vernon and Alexis Park Elementary Schools. Lastly, the 3 staff and 20+ participants of the Supported Work Program continued to work with 10 local contracted businesses.

Once again, the Association was saddened by the loss of two more very important people. Edgar Dobie, a past Board member of many years, and his son, Don Dobie, a resident of 26th Street since it opened, passed in October and November respectively.

In December, we organized our third annual Celebration of Trees and Art Auction. As usual, the Fundraising Committee did a wonderful job organizing the evening and the event continues to improve from year to year.

2007 VDACL continued to provide residential, vocational, educational, recreational and employment services to over 220 individuals. This year focused on individualized service plans, recruitment issues, staff training and development and strengthening community partnerships. It was another busy year!

January saw the Winter Carnival in full swing, with props and costumes being completed for the “*Carnival on Broadway*” at the beginning of February. The employment programs became the set of “Phantom of the Opera”, Day Program transformed into “Miss Saigon” and “Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat. Venture Uptown became “Never Never Land” with Peter Pan, which also became a part of the float for the parade. Venture Training took first place, with Venture Uptown taking second place, for the best decorated premises. On parade day, the VDACL float took second place for the best float entry in our category!



In March, the Board and Management started negotiations with School District #22 over the purchasing of the Dorothy Alexander Centre with the purpose of annexing it to the adjoining property with ACT and Lifeskills.

The Staff Appreciation Committee and administration staff hosted a BBQ to recognize staff with 5/10/15/20/25 years of service with the Association. This event proved to be very successful with over 90% of staff attending. This will become an annual event!

November saw the launch of the monthly newsletter “Venture Connections”. The newsletter gives staff an opportunity to share successes within the programs and to celebrate with stakeholders all that we do. Participants love sharing the photographs and articles with their family and friends.

This year was filled with many ups and downs and many staff and participants were deeply affected by the events and news received throughout the year. On March 28, we lost Don Paul McTavish, a resident at our 39th Street home since 1996. Don Paul was a courageous person with a wonderful sense of humour and will be greatly missed. June 11 saw another long time resident of 39th Street home, Jim Sjodin, pass away. Jim was an active member of the community. He loved fishing, camping, skiing and horseback riding. On December 14, the Association lost a long term staff member, Pearl Fleury. Her death left staff feeling completely numb and in shock. She was well respected and loved by all at VDACL. Lastly, Marjorie Lanoue passed away on December 16. Marjorie was a long time program participant and well known for her gentle ways and smile.

The Lunch Program had an exciting year! After the closing of West Vernon School, the program expanded to include three new schools as of September – Alexis Park Elementary, Mission Hill Elementary, Ellison Elementary and Harwood Elementary.

To improve the effectiveness and efficiency of our data collection, we acquired a new web based system called ShareVision. This is also a communication tool for staff and management and will be launched in the New Year. Participant information will be online which will ensure that all staff are kept up to date on relevant information for the individuals we serve. The information within the database will assist us in completing our Outcomes Report, which gives us a better understanding of the support needs of individuals and the complexity of the work that goes on daily.

2008 The year began with us saying goodbye to Arnold Bennington and Donna Atkinson. Arnold was a larger than life individual who impacted the lives of many people not only in Vernon, but throughout BC and across Canada. Arnold will be missed by all

who knew him. Donna was a long time participant and resident of 39th Street home. She will be remembered for her feisty personality!

In May, the Foundation purchased a house on 36A Street, previously owned by Shymore Holdings (Birch Training Home). The summer was spent renovating the house to include a lovely 2 bedroom basement suite and a 3 bedroom suite on the upper level. One of our participants requiring 24/7 care moved into the lower suite in September. The upper floor was rented out.



June marked the inaugural performance of the Chameleon Theatre Group. *The Land of Oz* was performed at the Schubert Centre, with a cast of 14 participants, before an audience of 350 people. Everyone is looking forward to the next production!

Much of the year was spent waiting on decisions in regards to obtaining the Dorothy Alexander Centre. In October, we were able to present an offer to School District #22 to purchase the building and 1.2 acre of adjacent property. Once the property is obtained, we will approach the City of Vernon to annex it to the 27th Ave property - ACT.

2008 marked the beginning of a new program, E-Waste Recycling. Venture entered into a contract with Encorp Pacific by providing the site for computer and television recycling. These products are sent to Tek Cominco in Trail, BC where the products are recycled. Volumes more than tripled over the year and generated an in-come of over \$40,000.00. As a result, we applied to the City for a building permit to expand the operation. Subsequent to the application, the City required a Statutory Right of Way (SROW) through Venture property for access to the future Ribbon of Green/Grey Canal trail above us.

Venture hired on a Bicycle Technician, Jason Bonner, to assist staff. The expertise Jason provided in bicycle repairs proved to be very

successful as sales more than doubled over past years and the backlog of bicycle repairs was maintained.

Our second CARF survey resulted in VDACL achieving another 3 year accreditation, the highest standard attainable. Janet Cunningham, who spearheads the accreditation process, deserves a special mention.

We ended the year off with another successful fundraiser - the 4th annual Celebration of Trees and Art Auction. The event was sold out!



2009 Venture participated once again in the annual Winter Carnival. This year's theme was "Dancing with Carnival". Venture Uptown was converted into the "Soggy Bottom Hoe Down Saloon", chuck wagon and all, for the best decorated premises. Community Connections became "The 50's Hop Cafe" and the "Masquerade Ballroom". Our float,

"Venture's Masquerade" once again took first place in the competition!

The end of June saw Venture and the Special Olympics collaborating in the "Golf Spectacular" fundraising event at the Spallumcheen Golf and Country Club. The event was a great success with para-olympian, Josh Dueck, as the Honourary Chairman.

In July, Venture qualified as one of the service providers in Vernon to deliver the Homeshare Program in the community. Until now, homeshare arrangements were handled by CLBC. Each homeshare contract is unique to the individual who requires a homeshare placement. At the end of 2009, we were supporting 12 individuals in homesharing arrangements and were actively looking and working with several other individuals to find the best home arrangement that suits their lifestyle, dreams, desires and needs.

Venture took on another new program - Florescent Tubes Processing. Through the donation of Kal Lake Rotary, we purchased a florescent tube processing machine to remove phosphorous and mercury in

order to keep these pollutants out of the landfills. Under contract from Regional District of the North Okanagan, we process approximately 2000-3000 tubes per month.

The Lunch Program continues to be a success delivering approximately 240 bagged lunches for four elementary schools in Vernon. We also now make lunches for Beairsto School once per week.

The down turn in the economy has affected the Woodworking Program with reduced dunnage sales to Tolko and Gorman Bros. Sawmill. However, additional survey and heliskiing landing stake orders provided adequate work for everyone to keep busy. Contracts with Okanagan Spring Brewery for new pallet construction and pallet repair also helped with keeping the saws humming. During the winter months, the woodshop finds itself sorting beverage containers from recycling to fill in where orders are lacking.

December saw the 5th annual "Celebration of Trees and Art Auction". The event has become so successful that we have now outgrown the Prestige Inn and will be looking for a larger venue to host the event next year!



2010 was a challenging and significant year for the organization. Venture continued the commitment to our participants while overcoming major challenges, both fiscal and systemic. Declining government funding at a time when the general economy was struggling posed even greater challenges for the future. The Day Program saw a reduction in funding but we were pleased to be able to say that the challenges were conquered, thanks to our staff, led by our management team! A positive note, despite the reduction in funding for the Day Program, the Association saw a steady growth in the number of individuals we support through Homeshare as well as in 1:1 funding for community inclusion.

Community Connections staff identified interest in running a thrift store in the 2008/2009 strategic plan. When the opportunity arose to transform the small offices attached to the E-Waste building into a thrift store, staff interest was turned into reality. Staff and

participants worked hard throughout the New Year and "Venture Treasures" was open for business at the end of February.

The addition to the original E-Waste building was complete and officially opened in March. A big "Thank You" goes out to the Board President, Klaus Linemayr, and the Building Committee for all their hard work in overseeing the construction. A celebration was held to thank all businesses who supported us with their donations of time, labour and materials in the project.



In May, Venture received three awards for environmental stewardship - the *Regional District of the North Okanagan Environmental Leadership Award* for our community work in regards to waste reduction and recycling, the *2010 City of Vernon Award for Sustainability* and the *Trail Builder of the Year* award. The *Trail Builder of the Year* award was provided by the Ribbons of Green Trails Society for our outstanding efforts in creating trails in the Greater Vernon area.

July saw Venture Uptown moving from its rented 27th Street facility (April House) back to the Venture Centre. This was the result of Day Program funding cuts based on the CLBC Service Redesign. This move, and the decision to implement a two week Association wide summer vacation closure, resulted in no staff being laid off or any individuals losing services. Another silver lining though, the summer closure provided an opportunity for most staff and participants to enjoy a wonderful vacation. Some lovely stories were shared from participants of joyful family reunions.



September marked the 55th Annual General Meeting. The Association honoured Board retirees, President Klaus Linemayr and Treasurer Cecil Schmidt. Klaus played a pivotal role in Venture Training's success since joining the Board in management of renovations and property development. Klaus held various key positions and for the past ten

years served as President of the Board. Cecil's affiliation dates back to 1969. For the most part, Cecil held the position of Treasurer, but he also served as President for a few years. He also contributed many hours of accounting to the Association. Both of these men dedicated their time, talents and knowledge to Venture Training. Their remarkable contributions will never be forgotten.

The CLBC Service Redesign, and a request from a concerned parent, challenged Venture to review the employment programs and to reorganize the Supported Work and Community Employment Programs. In October, a vacancy occurred in the Supported Work Program and Venture created an Employment Development Officer position to increase community employment and provide support to individuals who required it.

We said goodbye to three more participants this year, namely Herbert Kutschner, Heather Robinson and Neil Finlayson. They were all active in the Community Connections Day program and are missed by all their friends in the Association.

The 6th annual Celebration of Trees and Art Auction was again a success and was held in its new home, the Best Western Vernon Lodge.

2011 The year started with CLBC announcing a 22 million dollar deficit for their year ending March 2011. The monies needed to balance the budget were to be found in existing budgets and through service redesign. The service redesign focussed on residential services and individuals living in group homes who potentially would be better served in homeshares and employment services. It was a challenge at times this year to maintain an optimistic and positive outlook. The impact of the economy and the decrease in provincial funding to CLBC, combined with increasing costs on all fronts, caused significant challenges. It became apparent with the new CLBC funding documentation required of all organizations, that Venture had been under funded for the services we provide. Demands on the budget were legitimate requests to improve the quality of services we deliver and it was difficult to say no, but we were increasingly forced to do just that - say "no".

"Cooking with Carnival" was the theme for the 2011 Vernon Winter Carnival and there is nothing Venture does better than cooking.



To increase participation in the organization, senior staff decided that Venture needed to have an annual internal competition for Winter Carnival. The "chili cook off" became the first challenge for the inaugural trophy. With every program participating and some very creative recipes, the judges had 14 dishes to sample before they declared 26th Street Residence the winners!

Again, the organization closed for the last week of July and the first week of August to meet the ongoing 10% cut in funding. While staff and participants were concerned about the impact this would have, on reflection it proved to be a fair way to address funding issues without making cuts to staffing or programs.

CARF Accreditation review was conducted in October. VDACL, for the third consecutive time, earned a three year accreditation. The surveyors recognized that Venture was in conformance with the CARF standards and the organization works hard in developing and maintaining systems that ensure positive outcomes and high quality services.

Venture Uptown moved to our newly rented facility located at 3309 - 31st Ave, the old Vernon Daily News building. They were joined by the Community Employment Program with plans for Venture Treasures Thrift Store to open in early 2012. This location addressed some of the overcrowding at the main site and also provided excellent opportunities for more community integration and inclusion with its prime downtown location.

Community support from local businesses, local government and the general public was stronger than ever during the past year in all of our work programs. Staff and program participants continued to rise to the challenge by streamlining operations wherever possible to keep up with the extra workload.

Venture said goodbye to David Guenther at a very young age of 25. He came to the 26th Street Residence shortly after his 19th birthday in 2005. He had many challenges with his health and will always be remembered for his winning smile and great personality. Surely he is smiling down on us as he plays hockey and chases the girls!

Centrepoint welcomed Ginger as a new neighbour upstairs. Centrehouse flourished with activity ever since she moved in. Ginger loves living on her own in her 1:1 staff assisted, three bedroom suite. She is proud to call Centrehouse her home and plans to stay forever!

Homeshare continues to offer individuals a very flexible living opportunity with supports put in place to ensure their health and safety and to meet all of their needs. Since the program's inception in 2009, there had been an increase from 12 homeshares at the end of 2009 to 31 at the end of 2012!

2012 The year began with some reorganization of programs, as well as the opening of Venture Treasures Thrift Store at the new downtown location.

Unions and Employers commenced bargaining early in the year. With no new money available, cost savings and looking at new ways of providing services were an important factor in this round of bargaining. April saw organizations providing Essential Service Plans to CSSEA for sign off in the case of strike action. Bargaining was suspended in June and the unions took a strike vote which resulted in a 72 hour strike notice being given. Rotating strikes continued up until the end of the year. Fortunately, Venture was not affected as the union agreed to suspend strike action.

Venture continues to have problems recruiting and retaining new staff. This is an issue faced by agencies throughout all of BC. Our sector could not compete with the higher wages that the health and education sectors offered, resulting in our Association continually losing staff. The high costs of training and orientating staff that moved on was a drain on valuable resources that would have been better spent on enhancing the services provided to our participants.

Once again, 2012 was exceptionally busy in all of the work programs. With well over 100 clients involved in the diverse work options that our Association offered, our dedicated staff, five forklifts and five service vehicles were kept very busy. Support staff and participants continued to rise to the various challenges faced on a daily basis. It was another productive year.

Venture Treasures Thrift Store had proven to be a success. The program had two part-time staff and 15 participants who volunteered on a weekly basis. Donations kept flooding in and the public and participants soon become known to each other on a first name basis! People started stopping by just to say hi!

With a growing workforce and increasing labour relations issues, a Human Resources Manager was hired in December.

2013 The Association continued to grow: growth was evident in all parts of the organization. With growth comes new opportunities and new challenges. We saw growth in community inclusion, the employment programs and especially in Homeshare.

2013 will go down in history as the year the "Cooperative Gains Mandate" kicked in and landed a low blow to provincial agencies with regards to the funding of collective agreements. Some principles of the mandate included that the Province would not be providing additional funding for increases to compensation in the collective agreement and that Employers were not to reduce service levels or charge the public a fee to compensate for extra wage costs. None of the above was communicated to agencies during the bargaining process. On the contrary, agencies were assured that the wage increases would be fully funded. Our work programs were already operating on minimal funding and the administration rate CLBC allowed for all VDACL contracts was likely the lowest in the province. Staff client ratios were also being stretched. There was the suggestion to terminate long serving employees as a viable solution, however that was not a route the Board or Management was willing to take. The effects of the Corporate Gains Mandate placed VDACL operations in a deficit position. Steps will need to be taken to minimize the impact of the CGM in the future.

This past year saw a number of changes within the Therapeutic and Supported Work programs. On March 1, 2013, an extensive fire destroyed the NORD Blue Bag Recycling Facility at the Vernon Landfill. The facility was no longer usable and 3 staff and 15 participants a day were out of work. We were forced to reorganize. Ed Columbus worked extremely hard at obtaining new supported work contracts to make up for the lost work and revenue. In the end, all staff and participants were accommodated and placed within Association programs.

Recent changes to CLBC's mandate resulted in agencies taking on more of the Behaviour Support Plan responsibilities than in the past. A Behavioural Support Counsellor was hired in May to provide early intervention training, mentoring, tracking and behavioural supports to participants, families, caregivers and staff.

Another challenge we faced was space. For five years we were in negotiations with School District #22 to purchase the Dorothy Alexander Centre. In July, we were advised that the School District no longer wanted to sell the property and we were given notice to vacate the premises by the end of August. It was with mixed emotions that we hosted our last Celebration Day there on August 24, 2013. It certainly felt as if we were being evicted from our old home that we had ties to for over 50 years. All the time, effort and money invested over the last five years felt like such a waste. We were forced to look at other alternatives and reorganization of the programs and facilities was again a reality. We were on the hunt for a new building to accommodate our ever growing programs and participant count.

On June 28, 2013, the Association received the news that Klaus Linemayr had passed away. Klaus joined the Association in 1991 and became a member of the Board in 1992. During his 20 years, he held many positions, including President twice. The last time for nearly 10 years! His remarkable contribution to Venture, his tireless enthusiasm and vision impacted everyone associated with Venture over



the past decades. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him and the field of Community Living lost a dedicated and committed advocate.

In October we faced yet another goodbye with the passing of Lowell Wilmot from the 39th Street Residence. Since coming to us in 2008, he participated in many community activities. He enjoyed horseback riding with NOTRA, hiking and biking with CRIS and swimming at Aquadept. He enjoyed the Winter Carnival, music, dancing and bowling. He will be missed by everyone.

A new Employee Data Management System – *Comvida*, was rolled out in July. *Comvida* provides a one-stop shop for the management of employee data and staff scheduling. The Association was using two separate systems, however, these resources no longer served the Association’s growing needs and a more inclusive system was required.

In October and November, we participated in the “Include Me” initiative with CLBC. Self advocates, who had been trained as surveyors, interviewed 140 individuals over a two week period at Venture and ACT, with an additional 19 surveys being conducted over the telephone or online. The survey consisted of 50 questions based on the “Personal Outcomes Index” in the areas of independence, social participation and well-being. The survey was based on the work of International Quality of Life Expert, Dr. Robert Schalock. The data gathered on personal outcomes helped all involved in Community Living to develop a deeper understanding of the impact that supports and services have on individual’s quality of life.



In November, Venture made an offer to purchase the “Lumby Bottle Bin”. This was a new experience in doing business for us as well as a new opportunity for the individuals we provide services to. Not to mention an opportunity to reach out into a nearby community to spread the word about who Venture is as an organization!

The year concluded with the hosting of the 10th Annual Celebration of Trees and Art Auction. The event was well attended and the art and trees reached record setting bids from a very generous audience.

2014 Venture continued to grow. However, financially it had been another difficult year. With the wage increases negotiated under the “Cooperative Gains Mandate” and no additional monies to fund the increases and the historical funding gap (the level of funding level CLBC indicates what we should be paid for services and what they actually pay), the Association showed a deficit for the second time in twelve years. We continued to work collaboratively with CLBC to address the historical funding gap and the Association continued to develop new business opportunities and community partnerships to build other revenue streams to subsidize the current level of programming.

In May, our E-Waste collection site became a Multi Materials BC contractor. This enabled Venture to be paid for collection of blue bin materials, styrofoam, glass and plastic film. A generous donation from the North Okanagan Handicapped Association (NOHA) was used to purchase a cardboard and plastic film baler and install two tube gas heaters to provide heat in the E-Waste building for the winter. The purchase of the baler provided additional important work for our participants, reduced our packaging and handling of recyclables and increased our program revenue. We had in excess of 50 drop offs of recyclables daily, representing strong support from our community.

Under contract with the Regional District, styrofoam processing continued to provide a steady workload. Venture also entered into a contract with *Emterra Recycling* to control litter at the landfill site. This provided daily work for up to 5 participants.

We were able to purchase a new van for our supported work crews that go out into the community thanks to another generous donation from the North Okanagan Handicapped Association (NOHA). We attained new contracts for landscape maintenance and snow removal with Hospice House, Ukrainian Village and St. Nicholas Parish.

Space at the Venture Centre had become an issue over the past 2 years and the NOFMH, Board of Directors and management were left looking for new facilities to accommodate some of the programs. In May, the NOFMH purchased a building on 23rd Street to accommodate Community Connections and Uptown. This allowed the Association to increase opportunities for individuals and meet their ever changing needs.

The offer we placed on the “Lumby Bottle Bin” was accepted and we were now the owners of a new business venture – “Venture Bottle Depot”! This purchase enabled us to expand the skill based training for individuals in the therapeutic work programs to increase their skills and work towards supported or community employment. It also helped fill the gap in the work programs that was left when the Vernon Landfill Building burned and we lost the “blue bag” recycling program. Additionally, this program gave Venture the opportunity to expand services into a new community and provide the community with a greater opportunity to recycle goods with the expanded programs of Ewaste, glass, cardboard, etc.

September saw the Association preparing for its fourth CARF accreditation survey. Participating in the survey is always an interesting yet exhausting process. It involved 3 surveyors, 2 surveyors from BC and 1 from USA, visiting the organization for 3 days. The organization continues to successfully maintain its three year accreditation status!

Using the space vacated at Venture Centre by the Day Program, December saw the organization developing the VITAL Program (Venture’s Individual Training and Adaptive Learning Program) for individuals who need 1:1 support for daily living skills and communication. The program began with one individual and continues to increase as more individuals meet the criteria for the program, transition from school or into the community.

2015 Although the year is not yet over at the time of this printing, several activities of the Association need to be acknowledged.

The year began with the programs working on the “Rock and Roll” Winter Carnival. Community Connections premises were decorated with memories of the past. We saw full size replicas of the Beetles and Elvis. These decorations were then used for the float. Venture again took first place.

The organization, with the assistant of Kevin Koopmans, developed a new strategic plan for the next five years. This was an important process as many of the senior management team will be retiring in the next five years, to ensure the success of the organization moving forward it was important to develop a succession plan and outline the direction of the organization.

As part of the succession plan Ryan Cucheron was appointed Assistant Director. He will transition in the Director of Operations position with the retirement of Ed Columbus, early next year. Ed has worked for the organization for 26 years and his contribution to the organization has been immense. He will be greatly missed.

With the closing of Twin Cedars, Venture has been asked by CLBC to open two 4 bed homes. Staff are working on purchasing the homes and renovating them to open them by January 2016. Venture continues to grow .

The 60th Anniversary celebration, held on September 17, 2015, provided an opportunity to truly celebrate along with present and past students, participants, staff, community members, service club members and the Association Board Members who have all contributed to the success of VDACL. Without their foresight, dedication, and hard work this celebration would not be possible.

PRESIDENTS: 1955 – 2015

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