



VDACL NEWS



This Fall, programs have been getting out and experiencing all our community has to offer. Whether visiting apple orchards, exploring the pumpkin patch, adventuring in local parks, or learning and creating indoors, our association has been loving this harvest season!

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for Community Living**

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OUR PEOPLE, OUR STRENGTH: LEARNING AND LEADING

Employee of the Month

Every month, we celebrate teammates who go the extra mile! Nominations come from peers, and one winner is randomly selected. Congratulations Winners!

EMPOWERING INDEPENDENCE: IN-SERVICE TRAINING DAY

On October 24, the team gathered for a day of learning. We hosted two separate sessions, complete with a tasty lunch from Chopped Leaf.



Empowering Life Skills & Balancing Duty of Care with Dignity of Risk; Josh Pisapio and Danielle Vernon-Jarvis (PosAbilities) led a thought-provoking session on encouraging independence while maintaining safety. A key concept was dignity of risk—the right to make choices, take chances, and live fully, even when risk is involved. Our role is to support informed decisions and create environments for growth. Balancing duty of care with dignity of risk helps people build confidence, develop life skills, and lead self-directed lives.

Inclusion in Recreation and Leisure; Led by VDACL's own Nancy Bellward, this session highlighted how inclusive recreation directly impacts quality of life; it's far more than "just passing time." Nancy emphasized the role of leisure in building social connections, promoting belonging, and supporting mental well-being. The interactive workshop drew on staff experiences and sparked practical ideas for adapting activities and removing barriers, ensuring everyone can participate meaningfully.

Thank you to our presenters for sharing their expertise, and to all staff who made adjustments to attend. Your commitment to learning and collaboration helps us provide person-centered, inclusive support every day.



September
Lisa van Veelen



October
Nancy Bellward



November
Tracy Eddy

MEET OUR NEW PC1s!



CHARLINE HAIGH

Charline is our new Program Coordinator 1 for Community Inclusion & Semi-Independent Living. Charline brings a ton of enthusiasm to her role and is passionate about inclusion and supporting individuals. Previously in a support worker role at VDACL, she's thrilled to be part of the leadership team and eager to learn all the ins and outs of her new position!



LESLIE BONSAN

Leslie recently joined Venture as Program Coordinator 1 for Cedar House and Centrepont, bringing nearly 30 years of health care experience, with over 20 years in disability services. Passionate about supporting individuals with disabilities, Leslie chose Venture because of his family's long-standing connection to the organization. He's excited to contribute to future growth and has already found the team welcoming and sincere.



HONORING TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

In the weeks leading up to National Truth and Reconciliation Day, programs across the association focused on teachings that encouraged reflection, learning, and action. From classroom discussions to community engagement, participants explored the importance of reconciliation and the impact of residential schools.



A SCOOP OF FRIENDSHIP!

In Late September, Venture Connections was invited by friends in the community for an ice cream party at Dixon House! The day featured themed décor and nostalgic parlor outfits, creating a fun, retro vibe. Friends enjoyed relaxing in the backyard, playing board games, and savoring cold treats. A great time was had by all!



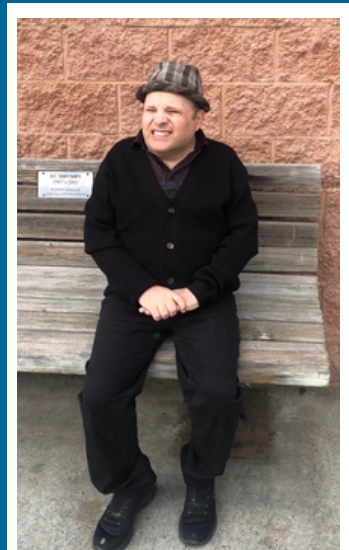
A JOURNEY TO CLEARER VISION

When David, who lives in one of our community homes, learned he needed eye surgery, it was a mix of nerves and excitement. His optometrist discovered cataracts, and the procedure was the next step. With the support of caring staff and healthcare professionals, DL faced this challenge head-on.

Blinda, one of David's support workers, gave us an insight to his experience during the procedure, and his recovery afterwards. At the hospital, nurses went above and beyond to make David comfortable. They held his hand, told jokes, and kept him calm. Anyone that came by shared their favorite hockey teams with him, making David feel included and supported. Their kindness turned a stressful day into a positive experience.

After surgery, David woke up in recovery to familiar faces that helped him feel safe. He seemed relieved—until he learned there would be eye drops, which he really dislikes! The doctor explained that rubbing his eyes could mean doing the surgery all over again, and that clear instruction made a big difference.

To help himself succeed, David wore gloves and goggles to protect from rubbing his eyes until he felt confident. Eye drops were still a challenge, but thanks to patient, loyal staff, he managed the process and kept his eyes healthy. Two weeks later, at his follow-up appointment, David was proud of how well he had done.



The best part? David's confidence soared. When he visited his family church in Kelowna, he walked taller, smiled bigger, sat in a new spot, and joyfully told everyone about his experience. *"He walked more confidently... said hi with huge smiles and long stares at people,"* Blinda shares. He even learned something surprising; he had been 100% blind in his right eye before surgery! David is a great example of prioritizing his health, even when the process isn't always fun. We're so happy and excited to see the continued positive impact of this surgery!



Venture Connections went all out for their annual Halloween Dance Party! Participants and staff from across the association joined the fun; dancing to spooky beats, sipping colorful punch, playing games, making crafts, and winning door prizes. The best part? The incredible creativity on display! From classic costumes to imaginative originals, everyone brought their best. Thank you to all who joined us and helped make this year's party a frightfully good time!





TIME FOR S'MORE FUN!

Does it get any better than crisp autumn air, golden leaves, and the smell of marshmallows roasting over an open fire? On October 9th, participants gathered at beautiful Ellison Provincial Park for our much-loved Annual Fall Marshmallow Roast. Everyone came prepared for a cozy fireside picnic lunch, complete with games, music, laughter, and steaming cups of hot chocolate. The highlight, of course, was roasting marshmallows to perfection. The smiles say it all!



THE PLACE: WHERE WE BELONG



What does true workplace inclusion look like? For Steven and Tamsel, it means being valued for their skills and contributions. As part of National Disability Employment Awareness Month in October, we sat with Steven and Tamsel from The Place; our lunch program that prepares meals for local schools, providing meaningful employment opportunities.

Steven and Tamsel both began at The Place as participants in VDACL's

therapeutic work program. In 2019, the program transitioned from a funded initiative to a social enterprise, and they were hired as production employees, with Brandon joining soon after. "We're a team," says Steven. "We help each other and make sure everything gets done."

Steven brings experience from fast-food and diner settings, where he learned the basics of food prep and cleaning. Today, he enjoys managing inventory and ensuring every order is complete. Tamsel's background includes honorarium roles and goodwill programs with seniors—work she found rewarding, though not without challenges. She recalls moments of discrimination and hurtful remarks that made her feel unwelcome. At The Place, things are different: "Inclusion is being accepted for what you can do," says Tamsel. Steven adds, "It's being seen and acknowledged for what you do well."

Both agree that employment opportunities for people with disabilities matter because they build independence and strengthen community connections.

When asked what employers should know, Steven emphasizes patience and understanding: "Some employers expect more than you can give." Tamsel adds, "Focus on what people can do, not what they can't."

Their advice for job seekers with disabilities?

"Be yourself. Do what you can do, and if you can't? That's okay," says Tamsel. Steven echoes, "Be honest about your capabilities."

Looking ahead, Tamsel is excited about retirement and more time for art and community involvement. Steven is happy to stay with the lunch program: "As long as it's here, this is where I'll be."

Steven and Tamsel remind us that inclusion isn't about doing everything—it's about recognizing what we do well and respecting our limits. When workplaces focus on strengths and



allow people to contribute in ways that fit their abilities, confidence grows, teams thrive, and dignity is preserved. That's the true power of inclusion.

CLUB CONNECT'S FALL FUN

Club Connect has carried the excitement of summer straight into fall. Highlights include an early season evening paddle with Vernon Adaptive, glow bowling at Lincoln Lanes, sunset disc golf, and joining Vernon's first Zombie Walk, a fundraiser for The Schubert Centre. Of course, we couldn't miss the Field of Screams! Most recently, the club enjoyed an outstanding performance of "The Play That Goes Wrong", thanks to tickets generously donated by Powerhouse Theatre. We can't wait to see what unforgettable experiences Club Connect will share this coming winter!



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THANKS FOR READING!

Comments can be emailed to: info@vdacl.ca



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