



# CONNECTING OUR COMMUNITY

A Madawaska Valley Association For Community Living Publication  
19491 Opeongo Ln. Barry's Bay ON  
(613) 756-3817

April 2025

**When you Belong, You Believe!!**



MVACL is very proud to announce their success on becoming partners with the Jays Care Foundation. This partnership will surely bring great opportunities and positive impact to our community.

MVACL is excited to offer Challenger Baseball, an inclusive program offered to anyone in the community. This is a program designed to empower individuals with physical and cognitive disabilities through baseball and softball. The program aims to foster connection, courage, independence, and a love for physical activity. It will run twice a week from June to September, with specific days and times to be confirmed. MVACL has received an outdoor equipment kit to support the program, including gloves, bats, balls, helmets, and more.

To sign up or to volunteer please contact Mindy at [mbrotton@mvacl.ca](mailto:mbrotton@mvacl.ca) or Kelly at [kdombroski@mvacl.ca](mailto:kdombroski@mvacl.ca)

**STAY TUNED FOR MORE INFORMATION!!**





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## May – Community Living Month Activities

# LET'S CELEBRATE

COMMUNITY LIVING  
Madawaska Valley

**May 5**

*Kick Off BBQ - Join us on the Green to Kick off Community Living Month - Everyone Welcome! Lunch is provided. Staff will be recognized for years of service. Draws for door prizes*

**May 14**

*Hospital Token Day - MVACL will be “paying it forward” by handing out tokens at St. Francis Memorial Hospital from 9:00 am to 3:00pm*

**May 15**

*Horseshoe Night at Barry's Bay Legion. No experience required. Come out and enjoy the music by Andy Mayenburg from 4:00pm to 7:00pm*

**May 17**

*Bay Day - Main Street - Visit MVACL's tent to participate in a variety of Kid's games. Fun, prizes & treats! Also learn who we are and the work we do! 9:00 am to 4:00 pm*

**May 21**

*Trivia Night - Join us at Vito's for a fun night of Trivia - No cost to enter. A minimum of 4 players per team. 7:00pm to 8:30pm*

**May 24**

*MVACL and the Madawaska Valley Public Library are partnering for a meet the author event at the Learning Centre at the Main Office. Author Susan Dagenais discusses her book “E is for Maggie”; the story about a mother's love for her daughter with autism. Starts at 1:30pm*

**May 27**

*MVACL is partnering with the Madawaska Valley Public Library to bring you a free movie night at the Barry's Bay Legion. “Out of My Mind”, is the story of Melody Brooks, a sixth grader with cerebral palsy who is nonverbal and uses an electric wheelchair. Despite her physical challenges, Melody has a photographic memory and a sharp mind. The film explores her journey as she navigates the challenges of middle school, makes new friends, and proves that her voice matters. MVDS will be hosting a canteen. Movie starts at 6:00pm. Thanks to Barry's Bay Legion for donating their space free of charge.*

**May 30**

*Come play, or cheer. MVACL is hosting its Annual Baseball Game at the Paul J. Yakabuski Community Centre starting at 9:00am. Hot dogs, prizes, games, and more. Contact Mindy or Kelly at 613-756-3817 for more information*

**50/50 TICKETS WILL BE SOLD AT EVERY EVENT  
DRAW TO BE HELD MAY 30TH**







## May – Community Living Month Kick Off BBQ

*On May 5<sup>th</sup> we held our Annual Kick Off BBQ - This was held on the Green at the Main Office - It was a bright and sunny day and we welcomed supported people, along with staff, as well as people from the community. A free BBQ lunch was provided for all. Staff were recognized for years of service and we held draws for door prizes.*



### Years of Service

Tracy Biskup - 20 years  
Shauna Brotton - 20 Years  
Sherry Hecht - 15 years  
Sandy Surnoskie Gibson - 10 year  
Angie Cormier - 5 years  
Megan Chapleau - 5 years  
Ashley Neuman - 5 years  
Kelly Dombroski - 5 years  
Savanna Cybulski-Parks - 5 years  
Luqe Jones - 5 years







## Happenings at Community Connect

### LADIES TEA



### CERAMIC EGG TRAY CRAFT



### MEN'S HYGIENE TRAINING



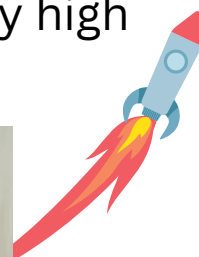




## In Memory

**Ron Olsheskie May 19, 1956 to April 7, 2025**

It is with deep sorrow that we announce the passing of Ron (Rocket) Olsheskie, a dedicated advocate and compassionate support worker, who devoted 33 years, 10 months and 12 days of his life to supporting individuals with developmental and/or intellectual disabilities. Ron began his career with MVACL in 1991. Throughout his employment, Ron was more than just a staff member - he was a mentor, a friend and a strong believer in the potential of every person. His legacy is not just in years of service, but in the lives he uplifted. Those who had the honour of working alongside Ron will remember his warm spirit, his sense of humour and his dedication to inclusion and equity. Ron's light may have dimmed, but it will never be extinguished in the hearts of those he touched. Fly high Rocket.....





## NEW MEMBERS OF THE MVACL TEAM



Aizaz Ali Shah



Jamee Moore



Amanda Burchat



Nisha Thapa Magar





## HR Happenings

With the spring weather here, I thought I would share the many benefits of being outdoors. Hope everyone enjoys some sunshine.

### Why getting active outside is key to your physical & mental wellbeing

Why getting active outside is key to your physical & mental wellbeing - ParticipACTION

Engage with the great outdoors to feel good in both body & mind

Believe it or not, physical activity and promoting mental wellbeing go hand in hand. In fact, studies show that regular physical activity can have profound impacts on mental health, decreasing symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Even better? Being physically active outdoors provides a bigger boost to your overall health – be it a reduction in pulse rate or a decrease in depression, fatigue, stress, and anxiety – by providing us with a dose of clean air, vitamin D, and phytoncides (a fancy word for natural oils that plants use to defend themselves against bacteria, insects, and fungi).

### 5 health benefits of being active outdoors

If you can get outside for a bit of fresh air and activity, whether it's on your balcony, backyard or even your local park, it all contributes to your overall health, both body and mind. Being physically active with Mother Nature exposes you to some amazing health benefits, such as:

1. Improved immune system – Boosted immune system functioning, with an increase in the count of the body's natural killer cells.
2. Boosted moods – considered by some to be a “natural antidepressant”, getting active outdoors and in the sun provides added mental health perks (particularly for those who may experience seasonal affective disorder).
3. Decreased stress levels – can provide a distraction from the stress and anxieties that life can throw at us, calms the autonomic nervous system (think fight or flight).
4. Provides daily dose of vitamin D – taking the activity outdoors lets us soak up some extra rays and naturally build our vitamin D stores.
5. Increases energy – fresh air is invigorating and refreshing while also helping ensure more restful sleeps.

Whether it's joining an outdoor yoga session, going for bike rides or even taking a stroll through your neighbourhood, being active outdoors (even a little bit each day) can go a long way to keeping you happy and healthy. Remember, the next time you are feeling down, anxious or even tired, the best thing for you might just be a little time reconnecting with the great outdoors.

While physical activity can be an essential mental health tool, you should always reach out for additional support and services if needed.





## Health & Safety



MVACL's Health and Safety Committee consists of 3 Union representatives; Tracy Biskup, Charmaine Petroskie, and Eric Visneskie. There are also 3 representatives from the Management team; Jaclyn Read, Simon Fero and Jason Fabian. Currently, Tracy and Jason are certified members through PSHSA.

As of April 25, 2025 MVACL is 361 days without a lost time at work accident. The longest our agency has gone without a lost time at work accident is 865 days. Congratulations on a concerted effort by everyone working here to be safe while supporting the people in our care.

The Health and Safety Committee meets at least 4 times per year. We will be meeting again in early May. Please forward any questions to one of the representatives before that date.

Keep up the safe, hard work!

*Jason*







*From the Executive Director*

## Rising Above the Noise: Reclaiming Positivity and Purpose

As we move further into the year, it's no secret that challenges—both within and beyond our sector—have created a sense of fatigue and frustration in many workplaces. In Developmental Services, where the work is both deeply meaningful and demanding, the impact of this broader societal malaise can feel especially heavy.

But here's the truth: our work matters. Every day, we show up not just for a job, but for people—individuals and families who count on us to support them in leading full, empowered lives. That purpose remains our compass, even in turbulent times.

It's time to reclaim the energy and spirit that brought us into this field. We are working together to foster a culture where optimism is not naïve—it's necessary. Where teamwork is not optional—it's our strength. And where satisfaction comes not from avoiding hard moments, but from knowing we make a difference, even through them.

We're investing in wellness, in team connection, and in making your voices heard. Your feedback and resilience are shaping how we move forward. Together, we're not just enduring—we're rising above.

Thank you for the care, heart, and commitment you bring each day

*Monica*

