



# CONNECTING OUR COMMUNITY

A Madawaska Valley Association For Community Living Publication  
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## A Season to Remember!!



This summer, Madawaska Valley Association for Community Living (MVACL) was proud to host the Challenger Baseball program, made possible through the support of the Jays Care Foundation. Challenger Baseball is an adaptive program designed to provide children, youth, and adults with developmental and/or intellectual disabilities the opportunity to enjoy the fun and excitement of baseball in a supportive, inclusive environment.

Every week, our players hit the field with smiles, laughter, and team spirit — proving that baseball truly is for everyone. From learning the basics of hitting and catching to celebrating every home run, each game brought our community together in the best way possible.

This year's program wouldn't have been possible without the incredible dedication of our volunteer coaches, who gave their time and energy all summer long to make each session special. Their encouragement, patience, and enthusiasm helped build confidence, friendships, and a strong sense of belonging for every participant. Our sincere thanks to Mindy Brotton, Kelly Dombroski, Glen Getz, Maryann Dombroskie, Amanda Levean and Chadd Stoppa.

We also want to extend our heartfelt thanks to the Jays Care Foundation for their ongoing partnership and generosity. Their support continues to make a meaningful difference for our players and their families, helping us ensure that everyone has the chance to experience the joy of sport.

As we pack up the bats and balls for another season, we're already looking forward to next year's Challenger Baseball season — and to seeing those familiar faces (and maybe a few new ones) back on the field!



## Honouring the Memory of Francis “Frankie” Yantha August 6, 1956 ~ July 29, 2025



Madawaska Valley Association for Community Living (MVACL) was deeply moved to receive a very generous donation made on behalf of the estate of Francis Raymond “Frankie” Yantha, with the support and kindness of his family.

Over 20 years ago, Frankie attended the sheltered workshop in what is now our Learning Centre. Frankie looked forward to being picked up by MVACL in Whitney and being driven to his job. He took great pride in his wood-working. He contributed to the manufacturing of Adirondack chairs which were for sale by MVACL to raise funds for the program. Frankie was known to everyone as a gentle soul with a ready smile and a love of music. Whether it was the sound of a guitar or a harmonica, he would light up with joy, tapping his foot and joining in with quiet enthusiasm.

Frankie’s story is one filled with warmth, family, and simple pleasures. Raised in a loving home surrounded by laughter, faith, and music, he carried those same qualities with him throughout his life. In Whitney, where he spent many happy years, Frankie was known for lending a helping hand — whether keeping the local ball diamond clean or helping around the house. Later, when he moved to Huntsville and eventually to Muskoka Shores, he continued to share his kind spirit with everyone around him.

The Yantha family’s decision to honour Frankie’s life through a donation to MVACL is a touching reminder of how generosity and compassion can continue to make a difference long after someone is gone. This contribution will help MVACL continue our mission of supporting individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities to live meaningful, inclusive lives in our community.

On behalf of everyone at MVACL — the individuals we support, their families and our staff — we extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Yantha family for this thoughtful and enduring tribute.

May his memory continue to bring comfort, inspiration, and hope to all who knew him.





## Happenings at Community Connect

Community Connect has been buzzing with activity over the past two months, bringing people together for fun, food, and friendship. Here's a look back at some of our most popular events:

### August Highlights

August 1 – We kicked off the month with a creative Water Colour Mug craft session, followed by a delicious sub lunch.

August 8 – Summer Bingo brought out the competitive spirit, paired again with subs.

August 13 – Movie Night featured Snow White, served with hot dogs and macaroni salad.

August 18 – Participants enjoyed making Sun Catchers and shared a meal of hot dogs.

August 25 – Our Movie Matinee showcased Zootopia, accompanied by spaghetti with meatballs and garlic bread.

### September Highlights

September 24 – Movie Night returned with Wish, alongside macaroni and cheese and a fresh tomato and cucumber salad.

September 29 – A cozy afternoon of Tote Bag crafting was complemented by cream of broccoli soup and cookies.

Amanda Klett spoke about her experience at Community Connect. She shared, “I like doing crafts, coming to movie nights and hanging out with my friends.”

### Looking Ahead: October Events

October 8 – Get spooky with our Porch Ghost Craft, served with cream of potato soup and a cookie.

October 15 – Movie Night will feature Lilo & Stitch, with tomato soup and grilled cheese.

October 31 – Celebrate Halloween with themed Bingo and pizza!

We're excited for another month of creativity, connection, and community. Everyone is welcome—come join the fun!



Lisa Piecarskie, Garry Beanish and Rose Baxter showing off their custom made tote bags!



**NEW MEMBERS OF THE MVACL TEAM**



**Lacey Mantifel**



**Crystal Hicks**

**Congratulations!!**



Congratulations to Sheila Corbett on successfully completing her DSW Apprenticeship program through Loyalist College.





## HR Happenings

### **What Does HR Really Do? Here's How We Support You!**

When people hear "HR," they might think about hiring paperwork, policies, or maybe the annual performance review. But Human Resources is about much more than that. At its core, HR exists to support you—the people who make our agency what it is.

Here's a closer look at what HR does for you every day:

#### **We're Here from Day One**

From your first day, HR is involved in onboarding, making sure you have the tools, information, and support needed to hit the ground running. We help you get settled, understand company culture, and connect with the right people.

#### **Training & Development**

Whether it's leadership training, professional certifications, or soft skills workshops, HR supports your growth. We're committed to helping employees learn, develop, and advance in their careers.

#### **Employee Well-being**

From mental health resources to modified work arrangements and accommodations, HR promotes a healthy work-life balance. We advocate for policies and programs that help you stay happy, healthy, and engaged.

#### **Fostering a Positive Work Environment**

HR works to create a workplace that's inclusive, respectful, and fair. We help manage conflict, uphold company values, and support a culture where everyone feels heard and respected.

#### **We're People People!**

At the end of the day, HR is all about people. Our mission is to support you, empower you, and help make our workplace one where everyone can thrive.

#### **What HR Does to Manage Employee Information**

##### **Data Accuracy & Security**

HR ensures that your information is always up to date and securely stored. We manage system access, keep sensitive data protected, and follow compliance regulations to keep your records safe.

#### **ComVida Support & Training**

Not sure how to use a feature in ComVida? HR provides guidance, training sessions, and quick how-to materials to help you navigate the system confidently.



## HR Happenings

### Connecting Other Systems

We integrate ComVida with scheduling, payroll, performance, and learning systems so that everything works together seamlessly—saving time and reducing errors.

### How HR Manages Open Future Learning for You

#### Support When You Need It

Need more time on a module? Trouble with a module? HR provides tech and user support so that nothing gets in the way of your learning.

### Why It Matters

When you engage with OFL, you're not just ticking boxes—you're:

Building skills that directly impact the people you support

Learning from voices of lived experience

Growing your confidence and knowledge in key areas

Helping to create a culture of best-practice, person-centered care

### MVACL DSW apprenticeship sponsor

As the Lead Sponsor, HR takes the lead in coordinating and supporting your journey through the apprenticeship. That includes:

#### Registering Apprentices

We help eligible employees enroll in the program by guiding them through the registration process with the Ministry and the training delivery agents (like colleges).

#### Tracking Progress

HR works with your trainers and managers to track your hours, competencies, and milestones, ensuring your training meets the requirements for certification.

#### Providing Support

We're here to answer questions, troubleshoot challenges, and connect you with resources—from understanding your learning plan to preparing for in-class sessions.



*Jaclyn*



## Health & Safety



### Preventing Slips, Trips, and Falls This Winter

As winter approaches, icy sidewalks, wet floors, and snow-covered entrances become everyday hazards — especially for those working in a community setting and supporting individuals in residential, SIL and CPS programs. Slips, trips, and falls are among the most common workplace injuries, but with awareness and prevention, they are also among the most avoidable.

#### Stay Prepared and Plan Ahead

Before heading out, check the weather forecast and allow extra time for travel. Wear proper winter footwear with good traction — soles that grip well on wet and icy surfaces are your best defense against slipping. It is a good idea to have a second pair of indoor shoes to change into once inside.

#### Be Alert in and Around Worksites

Keep walkways, stairs, and entrances clear of snow, ice, and clutter. Use salt or sand on icy spots. When entering a building, wipe your feet thoroughly to prevent tracking in snow and moisture that can cause slippery floors.

#### Support the People You Serve

Many individuals supported by MVACL rely on staff for mobility and safety. Take extra care when assisting people outdoors — walk slowly, use handrails when available, and encourage safe footwear choices for them as well. Never rush, even if running behind schedule.

#### Remember: Safety Starts with You

Every step counts in keeping yourself, your coworkers, and the people you support safe this winter. Stay aware, take your time, and use the right precautions — because preventing a fall is always easier than recovering from one.

*Jason*





## *From the Board President*

Hello everyone,

It's a pleasure and honor to reach out to you as your Board President. I want to take a moment to celebrate a fantastic quarter, especially highlighting our collaboration with the Blue Jays Care Program this summer.

The experiences from the program were truly remarkable. Participants enhanced their baseball skills, built friendships, and shared countless joyful moments on the field. Whether they were perfecting their swings, or learning new strategies, it was heartwarming to see everyone engaged and having fun.

Thanks for your time and effort!

Also may I add...Go Jays Go!!

Sincerely,

*Joanne*

## *From the Executive Director*

As we welcome the fall season, it's a good time to reflect on what we've accomplished together so far in 2025. This year has brought many successes – new initiatives, strengthened partnerships, and continued dedication to the people we support. Our Community Connect program has provided opportunities for many people in our community with and without services, to make new friends, learn new skills, and simply have fun together. Our challenger baseball program provided similar opportunities twice a week throughout the summer. We have been able to bring new people into both SIL and residential service. Our expanding passport program has allowed many more people to achieve personal goals. We continue to offer regular training for both supported people and employees. We have 3 new board members, and our list of community partners continues to grow. Each achievement is a testament to the commitment, compassion, and resilience that define our organization.

At the same time, we recognize the broader challenges our sector is facing. The ongoing provincial labour unrest within the Developmental Services sector affects us all. For decades, this field has been chronically underfunded, creating real and lasting pressures on organizations, staff, and families alike. While we fully understand and respect the concerns being raised, it remains vitally important that the people we support do not suffer as a result of the dispute between the Ministry and the unions.

Through every challenge in our history, we have proven that collaboration is our greatest strength. We have always accomplished good things when we work together – guided by our shared purpose and our deep commitment to inclusion, dignity, and quality of life for those we serve.

As we move through the remainder of this year, it is my sincere hope that we continue to come together, communicate openly, and focus on our common goal; creating a stronger, more compassionate system of support for people with developmental disabilities.

Thank you for all you do every day to make that vision a reality.

*Monica*