



CONNECTING OUR COMMUNITY

A Madawaska Valley Association For Community Living Publication
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Happy New Year!!

As we step into the New Year, we look forward to the exciting opportunities and challenges ahead. The past few months have been busy, and the coming months promise even more activity and growth. We had a very busy December with many events taking place. We held our second annual “Christmas Lunch” which was a huge success. A big thanks to Andrea Budarick who cooked us an amazing meal that was enjoyed by all. Mike and his team from the Legion provided a beautifully decorated space and we enjoyed carols being sung by Jack and friends. Staff and supported people took part in a Secret Santa Gift Exchange. It was exciting to see the smiles on everyone’s face as they opened their presents!! Let’s continue to come together to support one another, celebrate our successes, and make this year one to remember. Here’s to a year filled with connection, progress and positivity for all!!





This Christmas, MVACL gifted each person we support with a personalized picture book. Special thanks to Kelly Dombroski for all her hard work and creativity to make this possible.



Orpha received a heartfelt Christmas gift from MVACL that brought her immense joy. A beautifully crafted picture book filled with snapshots of her adventures and whimsical sayings that captured her vibrant spirit. The inspiring quote nestled at the back added a perfect touch of motivation and warmth. Delighted by this treasure, she couldn't help but share it with everyone who visited showing off the images that told her story. Among all the photos, the one that touched her heart the most featured Orpha and her support worker. This remarkable gift is one she, and surely many others, will hold dear for years to come



Door Decorating Contest

Our recent door decorating contest was a delightful event that brought creativity, laughter and camaraderie to everyone who took part. All who participated transformed ordinary doors into extraordinary works of art. As people worked together in teams or as individuals, it sparked meaningful conversations, and fostered a sense of unity among all who joined in. One of the highlights was seeing the diversity of ideas and unique designs, some leaned into humour and simplicity, proving that creativity comes in all forms. This experience reminded everyone of the joy that comes from working and celebrating together. Our winners were Orpha Breen taking first place, Liberty House coming in a close second and Pinecrest finished with a third place victory!! Of our 28 entries, please see a sample of the excellent effort put forth by so many. Thanks everyone for your great participation! Start getting your creative juices flowing for next year.







Happenings at The Community Connect

In case you haven't heard MVACL has launched a new Community Participation Supports Program. The former 'Sweet Memories' has been transformed into the new Community Connect.

Community Connect is a vibrant resource centre. Our goal is to foster lifelong learning, enhance life skills, and nurture meaningful relationships. At Community Connect, individuals can access a wide range of educational programs, workshops, and activities designed to promote personal well-being. Whether you're looking to develop new skills, explore hobbies, or connect with like-minded individuals, Community Connect provides a supportive and inclusive environment where everyone can thrive. Through collaborative learning and community engagement, the centre aims to empower individuals to lead fulfilling lives and build strong, lasting connections.

Lunch and Learn: Our November Lunch and Learn sessions were a great success! Each event was well attended, with participants enjoying delicious soups and engaging in relationship-building activities and games. Here's a recap of the soups we made:

November 1: Creamy Tomato Soup

November 15: Taco Soup

November 29: Chicken Vegetable Soup

Participants took turns learning new skills in the kitchen, making these sessions both fun and educational.

November Movie Nights: We kicked off three exciting movie nights in November, each with a fun theme. Participants who embraced the themes were entered into a draw. Here are the details:

Movie #1: Home Alone and Ugly Sweater

Movie #2: Home Alone 2 and Christmas Pyjamas

Movie #3: Jingle All The Way and Christmas Hat

All three nights were well attended, and the lucky winner of the random draw was Tracey Stoppa. Congratulations, Tracey!

Christmas Cookie Exchange: Our Christmas Cookie Exchange was a sweet success! Four participants signed up, and the cookies were delicious. Thank you to everyone who took part.

New Year's Eve Movie Matinee: On December 31, 2024, we held a New Year's Eve Movie Matinee featuring Inside Out 2, accompanied by a delightful charcuterie plate. Despite the many holiday events happening, the matinee was well attended and enjoyed by all.

Coming Up:

January 21, 2025: Community Connect is hosting a Craft (Vision Board) session with lunch provided. Join us for a creative and inspiring afternoon!

January 30, 2025: Another Movie Night from 4-8 PM, featuring the movie Out Of My Mind. Don't miss it! Stay tuned for emails detailing our exciting plans for February!

Best regards, The Community Connect Team



Happenings at The Community Connect





Hello everyone,

I am excited to announce that I have successfully completed my apprenticeship and I am stepping into the role of a permanent DSS. This journey has been both rewarding and transformative offering me the chance to grow both professionally and personally.

During my apprenticeship, I had the opportunity to develop essential skills while gaining hands on experience. The guidance and mentorship I have received from my colleagues has been instrumental in my development and I'm deeply grateful for their support during this period.

As I take on this role as a DSS, I look forward to applying my knowledge and skills to support our team's growth and success. I am eager to embrace the new challenge, foster innovation and contribute to ongoing development!

Thank you to everyone who has been a part of this journey so far. I am excited about the future and look forward to seeing what we can achieve together!

Savanna Cybulskie-Parks

Savanna with
Jessica



Savanna with
Judy



Student Placement



The residents and staff at Sandhill would like to thank Alaina for the beautiful cutting board she designed in woodworking class, presenting it to us as a thank you gift on her last day. We are greatly appreciative that she chose M.V.A.C.L for her co-op placement. For the first while Alaina was quiet, polite and positive, taking directions very seriously. As time went on, she would start work as soon as she arrived, as she knew the routines in the house. Everyone was getting used to her sunny disposition, so much so

Judy and Melanie enjoyed having her paint their nails. She engaged with all the ladies, giving them her undivided attention to crafts, puzzles and colouring, showing that she cared. Having her come on their trip to Renfrew for lunch was helpful as each lady had a person to assist them. On the last scheduled day, she baked cookies with Melanie. Not only did she have Melanie's attention, but she had Lori's and Judy's as they stayed at the island to watch. It's clear that she has a lot of potential as a support worker.

She impacted the house and will be missed by all. We wish her all the best as she continues her studies and if she ever wants to pop in, she is more than welcome to come and share where her journey has taken her. Alaina, we wish you all the best, may you succeed at all you do. You have potential for greatness.

The Sandhill crew



Dear Sandhill,

Thank you so much for having me as a co-op student. I am grateful for the many opportunities to learn about what it's like to be a support worker and have improved my understanding of how to help adults with developmental disabilities. It has been very rewarding, leaving me with better communication and leadership skills. Through your guidance, I have learned how to communicate with nonverbal individuals using methods such as visual or nonverbal cues that help me build trust with the supported person and to improve interactions. I have also learned how important the little things can be such as if an individual is rubbing their head or touching it a lot, they may have a headache and are trying to tell you this. I will always remember Judy's smile and how much she likes to organize her beads. Your time and support has been greatly appreciated.

Alaina



HR Happenings

8 Ways Volunteering Benefits Employers and Employees

Spending time and effort volunteering in the community benefits everyone from the volunteer, the community, and even employers!

The Benefits of Volunteering

Volunteering in your community benefits everyone involved; it's a win-win-win for employers, employees and the volunteer organizations. Below are some examples of what employers and employees gets through volunteering.

 Employers	 Attract and retain employees	 Build a strong company culture	 Increase employee productivity & cooperation	 New connections and relationships
 Employees	 Leadership opportunities	 Increased overall health & happiness	 Demonstrate new skills to your employer	 Networking opportunities

Benefits of Volunteering for Employees

When employees are happier, more connected and engaged in their own professional development, they're just better employees. That's what volunteerism can provide!

#1. Provides Leadership Opportunities

Community volunteerism creates opportunity for leadership, which actually benefits the employee as well as the employer!

Opportunities to run local initiatives, charity drives, or organize fundraisers allows employees to showcase essential skills that directly translate into leadership roles in the workplace.

#2. Increases Overall Health & Happiness

You know that feeling you get when you help someone? Volunteering is like bottling that feeling up and taking a shot of it! Volunteerism is proven to make people happier, more creative, and more engaged.

#3. Demonstrates New Skills to Your Employer

Many volunteering opportunities allow employees to demonstrate skills, such as collaboration, teamwork, organization, and more.

In many cases, volunteering opportunities from a workplace will be in line with the goals and initiatives of the company. So you'll be helping out where it's relevant for your workplace while picking up essential skills. Win-win!

#4. Provides Networking Opportunities

Volunteering allows you to meet like-minded people, particularly in industries similar to your own. Forging connections and building stronger relationships expands your opportunities and horizons!



HR Happenings

Benefits of Volunteering for Employers

Employers who build volunteering into their corporate culture bring great benefits not only to themselves but to their employees. When businesses are actively engaged in their community, they gain additional business profile and connections that can lead to exciting new opportunities!

#5. Attracts and Retains Top Talent

Volunteering makes employees happier and more engaged with their work, boosting your retention of top employees. In addition, prospective employees may will volunteerism as a bonus, particularly if it is included as part of their total compensation package as paid volunteer hours!

#6. Builds a Stronger Brand and Corporate Culture

Corporate culture is another tool that is very important in attracting and retaining top talent, and volunteerism is one way to build the kind of culture that employees and employers can both be proud of. Additionally, volunteer opportunities puts your brand in front of customers and prospective employees in a very positive light, which is always a good thing!

#7. Increases Employee Productivity, Engagement and Collaboration

Volunteering simply makes employees better. it invigorates them and injects them with the kinds of feelings and passion that sparks creativity and inspired decision-making. Happier, healthier employees are more productive, engaged, creative, collaborative – you get the idea. All of that is a huge benefit to your business and your bottom line!

#8. Forges New Connections and Relationships

Community volunteering allows employers to build relationships within the community, opening up the potential for more collaborations and partnerships with other businesses and local programs. You'll also get the opportunity to mingle with your potential customers and future employees by promoting your brand in a very positive light.





Health & Safety



Slips, Trips, and Falls Prevention During Winter Months for Developmental Service Workers

As a Developmental Service Worker (DSW), your role involves not only providing essential support to individuals with developmental disabilities but also ensuring their safety and well-being. Winter brings unique challenges, particularly in the form of slips, trips, and falls caused by icy or snowy conditions. These incidents can lead to serious injuries, impacting both the individuals you support and your own ability to provide care. Here are strategies to minimize risks and maintain a safe environment during the winter months.

Understand Common Hazards

Winter weather creates numerous risks, including:

Icy walkways and parking lots: Black ice can be hard to see and dangerously slippery.

Snow-covered hazards: Hidden obstacles like curbs, uneven surfaces, or potholes can cause trips.

Wet indoor floors: Snow and ice tracked indoors can create slippery surfaces.

Reduced visibility: Snowstorms and shorter daylight hours can obscure hazards.

Proactive Measures for Safety

Inspect and Maintain Walkways

Ensure that pathways, driveways, and parking lots are regularly cleared of snow and ice.

Use sand, salt, or ice melt to increase traction.

Report unsafe outdoor conditions to your Manager.

Wear Appropriate Footwear

Choose shoes or boots with non-slip soles designed for winter conditions.

Use ice cleats or traction devices if necessary and remove them indoors to prevent damaging floors.

Create a Slip-Free Indoor Environment

Place absorbent mats at entrances to capture water and debris.

Establish a routine for mopping up wet floors promptly



Support Individuals' Safety

Assist with Mobility

Provide support, such as arm-in-arm assistance, for individuals with mobility challenges.

Encourage individuals to use handrails on stairs and ramps.

Adapt Activities

Plan outings and activities that consider weather conditions, avoiding unnecessary travel during storms. Promote indoor exercises or recreational activities to reduce exposure to outdoor risks.

Educate Individuals

Teach basic winter safety tips, such as walking cautiously on icy surfaces.

Provide proper winter gear, including warm clothing and sturdy footwear



Health & Safety



Emergency Preparedness

Know What to Do in Case of a Fall

Stay calm and assess injuries before moving. Call for medical assistance if necessary. Report Incidents. Document and report any slips, trips, or falls promptly to ensure future prevention efforts

Self-Care and Awareness

Stay Warm and Dry

Dress in layers and ensure exposed skin is covered to avoid frostbite. Keep an extra set of clothes and footwear at work in case of wet conditions.

Manage Fatigue

Winter conditions can be physically demanding. Take regular breaks to rest and recharge.

Stay Informed


Monitor weather forecasts to anticipate and prepare for hazardous conditions.

Conclusion

Preventing slips, trips, and falls during the winter months requires vigilance, preparation, and a proactive approach. By implementing these strategies, you can protect yourself and the individuals you support from common winter hazards, ensuring a safe and comfortable environment. Remember, safety is a shared responsibility, and small actions can make a big difference.



When there is snow and ice around...
Walk Like a Penguin



Shoes should have slip-resistant tread
Walk sloooooowlyyyyyyyyyyy
Walk with your arms out to the side, not in your pockets
Take small shuffle-like steps with your feet pointing out a little
Pay extra attention when you change surfaces

Jay



A Fond Farewell...

Bridget was a devoted mother to her twin sons Scott and Eric. Born and raised in Barry’s Bay, she was dedicated to helping other parents and families that had children with Developmental Disabilities. She first joined the Board of Directors at Madawaska Valley Association for Community Living in 1993 and with the exception of a brief sojourn in 2004, she remained a member until her resignation in Oct. 2024. Bridget took on the role of President for most of those 30 years. Being a member of the Board is a volunteer position. Bridget’s compassion and care, combined with her strong understanding of board governance gave her the skills necessary for success in this role. Despite weather or personal obligations, she diligently came to the office twice a month to sign dozens of cheques to ensure our excellent standing with vendors. Among her many duties as president, Bridget supported and was actively involved with a number of the agency’s accomplishments, such as the complete renovation of the administration building, the acquisition or building of a number of residential homes, “Sweet Memories” candy store, the Lite Lunch program, and Inside Out Summer Camp to name a few. Bridget was committed to MVACL and the work of the Developmental Service Sector.



MVACL is grateful to Bridget’s family who suggested that in memory of her, donations could be made to the SPCA or MVACL. We appreciate all the people who donated to our agency in honour of Bridget.

Many Thanks

We’ll miss you Bridget



From the Executive Director

As we step into a new year, I want to take a moment to reflect on the resilience, dedication, and collaboration we've shown in navigating the challenges of the past year. Together, even in difficult times, unity and determination can pave the way for success.

Together we have faced the challenges of inflation, post Covid fatigue, and under funding with creativity, perseverance, and a shared commitment to our vision. Each of you has played an integral role in ensuring we not only continued to provide excellent service to those we support but also found opportunities to grow and strengthen our foundation for the future.

Our ministry's Journey to Belonging initiative will require that same creativity and dedication as we continue to find ways to provide individualized support. This new year represents a fresh chapter—a chance to build on our experiences, embrace new possibilities, and continue working together to achieve even greater milestones. With your talent, passion, and unwavering commitment, I am confident that we can overcome any obstacles ahead and celebrate new accomplishments together.

Each year in January, our teams work together to wrap up all relevant paperwork from the previous year and prepare for the year ahead. This year, for the first time ever, all year-end paperwork was completed and filed by our self imposed deadline of January 31, 2025. Congratulations and many thanks to our Developmental Support Supervisors and their teams (including managers) for their concerted effort to meet this goal.

Let's move forward with renewed energy and optimism, knowing that our collective efforts make us stronger and more prepared for the opportunities and challenges ahead.

Thank you for your, partnership, and belief in our mission of working together to improve the quality of life for people with intellectual disabilities.

Here's to a successful and inspiring year ahead!

Monica