



CONNECTING OUR COMMUNITY

A Madawaska Valley Association For Community Living Publication
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July 2026

COMMUNITY LIVING MONTH 2026: A MONTH TO CELEBRATE COMMUNITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING



May was an incredible month at the Madawaska Valley Association for Community Living (MVACL) as we proudly celebrated Community Living Month. Together with the people we support, staff, families, volunteers, and community members, we celebrated inclusion, built new connections, and strengthened the sense of belonging that makes MVACL so special.

From shared meals and live music to baseball and community events, participants enjoyed a variety of activities that fostered friendship, creativity, and community spirit. Each experience brought people together, creating opportunities to connect, laugh, and make lasting memories.



Whether it was Annie and Dean sharing smiles on the baseball field, Richard and Christine welcoming visitors during our Hospital Parking Token Appreciation Day, or Jackson and Judy enjoying an evening of music at the Barry's Bay Legion, every moment reflected the friendships, inclusion, and sense of belonging that make MVACL so special.



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Our Painting Rocks for Kindness afternoon was a creative and inspiring event. Participants decorated colourful rocks with positive messages and beautiful artwork, creating small acts of kindness that will continue to brighten the days of others throughout our communities.



A huge thank you goes to Vito's for hosting a fantastic Trivia Night. The evening was filled with friendly competition, teamwork, and plenty of laughs. It was wonderful to see everyone enjoying themselves while coming together in such a welcoming atmosphere.

We were also proud to host our Hospital Parking Token Appreciation Day, where MVACL provided complimentary parking tokens for patients, families, and anyone visiting the hospital that day. It was a simple gesture aimed at easing the burden of hospital visits and giving back to our community in a meaningful way. We were grateful for the opportunity to help make someone's day just a little bit easier while celebrating the spirit of Community Living Month.

MVACL was proud to be part of this year's Bay Day celebrations by providing children's games for families to enjoy throughout the day. It was wonderful to see so many smiling faces as children played, families connected, and the community came together for another fantastic event.

As part of our Community Living Month celebrations, MVACL was pleased to host Music Night in partnership with the Barry's Bay Legion. Guests enjoyed outstanding performances by Cori Coulas and Jackson Kargus while sharing hot dogs, chips, and refreshments. We are grateful to the Barry's Bay Legion for their support and to everyone whose generous donations helped make the evening such a memorable success.



We wrapped up Community Living Month with our Annual Baseball Tournament—an incredible day of sportsmanship, friendship, and community spirit. The enthusiasm on the field and the support from our community made it the perfect ending to a month celebrating inclusion and belonging.

Thank you to our staff, volunteers, community partners, sponsors, performers, participants, and everyone who supported our events throughout the month. Your kindness, enthusiasm, and commitment made Community Living Month 2026 one to remember. We look forward to celebrating together again next year!

The smiles on Wendy and Tasha's faces say it all! Their enthusiasm and team spirit helped make the Annual Baseball Tournament another memorable celebration of inclusion, friendship, and community.

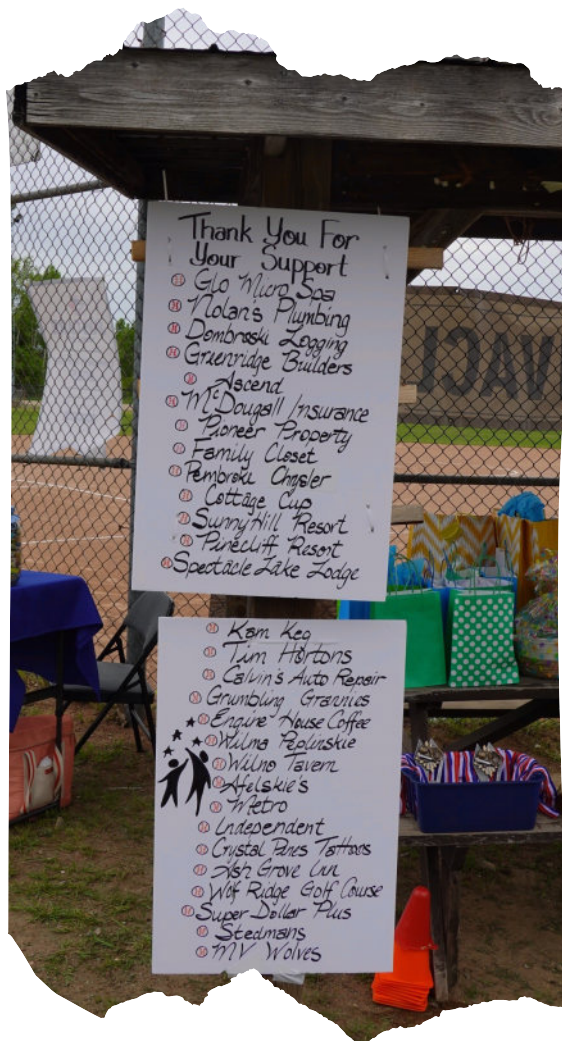


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Our Annual Baseball Tournament is truly a community effort. We are incredibly grateful to the many local businesses, organizations, and individuals whose generous support helped make another successful tournament possible.



The ice cream truck was a favourite stop throughout the day, giving players, families, volunteers, and spectators a chance to cool off, relax, and enjoy a sweet treat between games.



Congratulations to the Bancroft Base Invaders on an outstanding Runner-Up finish and to the Swamp Donkeys for once again claiming the tournament championship! While every team made the day special, these two teams earned top honours through their teamwork, determination, and excellent sportsmanship.



Boundless Fun

A Week of Adventure, Friendship, and Unforgettable Memories at Boundless Camp



On May 19, our Boundless Camp adventure officially began as we gathered at the legion, luggage in hand and excitement in the air, ready to board the bus for an unforgettable week. Upon arriving, we were warmly welcomed by Steve, Hannah, Kim, Jay, Ben and Jack, whose smiling faces immediately made everyone feel at home. After settling into our rooms, the fun began.

This year's camp theme was Vikings, and throughout the week everyone trained to earn the honor of becoming a Viking on the final day. Campers tested their skills in knife throwing, archery, Nerf target shooting, bowling, noodle ball, and even rock tossing. There were countless moments of celebration, including Matthew's excitement after hitting the knife throwing target. The smiles on Walter and Fern's faces while aiming Nerf blasters were simply priceless.

When we weren't sharpening our Viking skills, there were plenty of other activities to enjoy. Campers made friendship bracelets, painted individual wooden boards that came together to create a beautiful community chair, and spent a wonderful day at Foster Lake.

Courtney and Richard bravely jumped into the chilly water, although neither stayed in for very long! Many enjoyed canoe rides, beach games, and a delicious barbecue by the lake.

Knowing our group loves baseball and had a tournament coming up, the amazing boundless Camp staff surprised us with a trip to a local ball field for a friendly game, followed by ice cream for everyone. It was another perfect day filled with laughter and teamwork.

One evening, camp transformed into a hockey arena as everyone received their very own tickets to attend the Montreal Canadiens versus Carolina playoff game. Complete with slushies and popcorn during intermission, it truly felt like the real thing.

Another highlight was campfire night, where everyone shared their favorite moments from the week and enjoyed a smore before heading indoors for karaoke. There were amazing singers, enthusiastic backup performers, and plenty of laughter. It was a wonderful evening that brought everyone together through music and friendship.

No Boundless Camp story would be complete without recognizing the incredible chef Craig and Laura. We truly ate like Kings and Queens all week, and for many campers, mealtime was one of the highlights! Every afternoon at 3 p.m., everyone eagerly looked forward to the famous cookie time. Let's just say the cookies were so delicious that even staff put their acting skills to work trying to earn an extra cookie!

As the week came to a close, it was finally time to put all our Viking training to the test. Armed with foam-tipped bows and arrows, campers faced a series of exciting challenges. If a staff member caught your arrow, you earned the title of Viking. Then came the task of knocking down barrel towers before facing the biggest challenge of all, the dragons! Thankfully, our newly trained Vikings were more than ready, and the dragons didn't stand a chance. By the end of the adventure, every camper was crowned a Viking.

As always, the hardest part of camp was saying goodbye. With tears in our eyes, we boarded the bus for home, carrying with us incredible memories, stronger friendships and hearts full of gratitude.

A heartfelt thank you goes to the entire Boundless Camp staff for creating such an amazing experience. Your kindness, creativity, pushing us out of our comfort level and showing us, we can do anything, patience, and dedication made this week truly unforgettable. The memories made at camp will stay with us for years to come, and we are counting down the days until we can return.



Boundless Camp Highlights.

Campers quickly settled into their home away from home, where new friendships were formed and countless memories began. From games and laughter to late-night conversations, the cabins were filled with fun all week long.



Bryce embraced the Viking theme with plenty of personality! Whether relaxing between activities or joining in the fun, his smile and enthusiasm helped make the week even more memorable.



Richard gave archery a try under the guidance of camp staff, building confidence while taking aim at one of Boundless Camp's many exciting activities.



Evening's ended around the campfire, where campers relaxed, shared stories, laughed together, and reflected on another unforgettable day of adventure and friendship.



Lavina celebrated a bullseye during one of the week's Viking-inspired archery challenges. Camp activities encouraged everyone to step outside their comfort zone while having fun and cheering each other on.





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Happenings at Community Connect

Spring and early summer have been full of fun, learning, and meaningful connection at Community Connect. From April through June, participants enjoyed movie nights, bingo, creative craft days, and interactive Lunch & Learn sessions focused on building relationships and social skills.

Each activity created opportunities to connect, share experiences, and form lasting friendships. Whether working together on projects, enjoying meals, or cheering each other on, participants continue to build a strong sense of belonging within the Community Connect space.

We are also excited to highlight Cooking Up Connections; our seniors' cooking program held on Thursdays. This group has quickly become a welcoming space where participants can come together to prepare meals, share skills, and enjoy time with one another. A special thank you to Tracy for organizing and leading this wonderful initiative and helping create another opportunity for meaningful connection in our community.

Looking ahead, August will bring another great lineup of activities, including a Lunch & Learn session, Movie Night, and craft program. Anyone in the community is welcome to attend. To learn more or sign up, please contact Tracy at communityparticipationsupports@mvacl.ca.



Participants enjoyed preparing a delicious meal together while sharing recipes, conversation, and plenty of laughter. Our weekly Cooking Up Connections program continues to bring people together one meal at a time.

Eleanor and Jane enjoyed a relaxing afternoon creating colourful flower pots during one of our Community Connect craft sessions. Activities like these encourage creativity while bringing people together to share ideas, conversation, and new friendships.



Peter, Orpha, and Amanda put their creativity to work while decorating flower pots during craft day. Whether painting, laughing, or simply spending time together, every activity is an opportunity to build friendships and create lasting memories.



NEW MEMBERS OF THE MVACL TEAM



Shammi Bhandari



Isabelle Gonzalez



Krupal Patel



Madyson Church



Sara Milks



HR Happenings

Flourishing Together in Developmental Services

Supporting Our Wellbeing While Supporting Others

In Developmental Services, every day brings opportunities to make a meaningful difference. Whether you're supporting someone to build new skills, strengthen community connections, advocate for their choices, or simply enjoy the moments that matter most to them, your work has a lasting impact.

We also recognize that this work can be emotionally, mentally, and physically demanding. Supporting others requires patience, adaptability, empathy, and resilience. That's why caring for your own wellbeing is just as important as the care you provide.

This month, we'd like to introduce a concept from psychologist Martin Seligman, a pioneer in positive psychology. His research focuses on helping people flourish—not by ignoring life's challenges, but by building the strengths, relationships, and habits that help us navigate them.

The PERMA Model: Five Ways We Can Flourish

P – Positive Emotion

Positive emotion isn't about being happy all the time. It's about noticing the moments that remind us why our work matters.

It could be:

Seeing someone achieve a personal goal.

Sharing a laugh with a colleague or the people you support.

Receiving a heartfelt "thank you."

Celebrating a milestone, no matter how small.

These moments help replenish our energy and remind us of the difference we're making.

E – Engagement

Many of us chose this profession because we believe in supporting people to live meaningful, self-directed lives.

When we're fully engaged—helping someone develop independence, build relationships, learn a new skill, or participate in their community—we often experience a strong sense of purpose.

Finding opportunities to use your strengths each day can make work more rewarding and help prevent burnout.

R – Relationships

Developmental Services is built on relationships.

The trusting connections we develop with the people we support, their families, and our colleagues are at the heart of quality care.

Strong teams also support one another. Checking in with a coworker, offering assistance during a busy shift, or simply listening can make a significant difference.

Remember: asking for support is a sign of professionalism, not weakness.



HR Happenings

M – Meaning

Few professions offer the opportunity to make such a direct impact on people's lives.

Every person-centered plan you help implement...

Every choice you help someone make...

Every barrier you help remove...

Every moment of dignity, respect, and inclusion you help create...

These actions contribute to stronger, more inclusive communities where everyone belongs.

Even on difficult days, your work matters.

A – Accomplishment

Success in Developmental Services isn't always measured by large achievements.

Sometimes accomplishments look like:

- Helping someone gain confidence.
- Supporting a successful medical appointment.
- Navigating a challenging situation with compassion.
- Completing required training.
- Working together as a team during a demanding shift.
- Knowing someone felt safe, respected, and heard because of your support.

These accomplishments deserve recognition.

Supporting Your Own Wellbeing

Supporting others begins with caring for yourself.

Consider making space for small habits that support your wellbeing:

Take your scheduled breaks whenever possible.

Celebrate progress—not just perfection.

Stay connected with your teammates.

Reflect on one meaningful moment at the end of your shift.

Use available wellness resources when you need additional support.

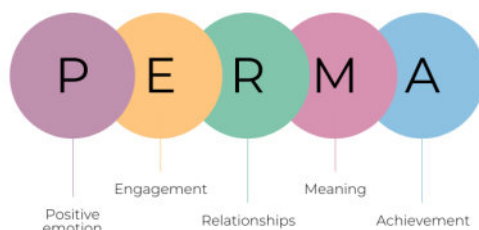
Speak with your supervisor, manager or HR if you're feeling overwhelmed—we're here to help.

Wellbeing isn't something we achieve once; it's something we build together, one day at a time.

Thank You

The compassion, professionalism, and dedication you bring to your work help create opportunities for people to live with dignity, choice, and belonging.

Thank you for the care you provide, the relationships you build, and the positive difference you make in the lives of the people we support and one another.



Jaclyn



Health & Safety



Summer Heat & Sun Safety: A Reminder for DSS and DSP staff

Summer is a great time to enjoy community activities, but heat and humidity can create health risks for both the people we support and DSPs. A little planning can help everyone stay safe.

Before You Go

- Check the weather, humidex, UV index, and any heat alerts.
- Plan outings during cooler times of the day when possible.
- Bring water, sunscreen, hats, and other essentials.
- Know where nearby shaded or air-conditioned spaces are located.

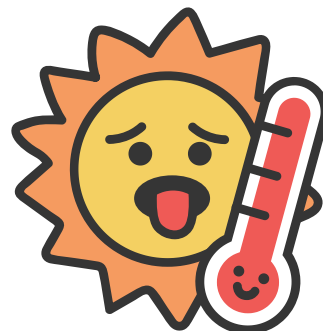
Support People Safely

Some people supported may be more vulnerable to heat due to health conditions, medications, mobility needs, or communication challenges. Offer water regularly, encourage cooling breaks, and watch for signs that someone may be overheating. Not everyone will say, "I'm too hot." Changes in mood, energy, balance, appetite, sweating, or willingness to continue an activity may signal heat-related illness.

Know the Warning Signs

Heat exhaustion can include:

- Dizziness or weakness
- Headache or nausea
- Heavy sweating
- Muscle cramps
- Extreme thirst



Move the person to a cooler area, encourage rest, and offer water if safe to do so.

Heat stroke is a medical emergency. Call 911 immediately if someone becomes confused, loses consciousness, has hot red skin, or shows signs of a very high body temperature.

Staff Safety Matters Too

Remember to look after yourself. Stay hydrated, take breaks, use sunscreen, wear appropriate clothing, and speak up if conditions become unsafe.

Quick Summer Safety Check

- ✓ Water available and offered often
- ✓ Shade or cooling area identified
- ✓ Sunscreen, hats, and lightweight clothing considered
- ✓ Activities adjusted for heat and humidity
- ✓ Signs of heat illness reviewed

With preparation, awareness, and teamwork, we can help supported people enjoy a safe and healthy summer while keeping ourselves safe too.

Jason



From the Board President

Hello Everyone,

I hope you are all enjoying the beautiful summer season! It has been an incredibly busy and rewarding few months for the Madawaska Valley Association for Community Living, and I wanted to take a moment to look back at some of our recent highlights.

To celebrate Community Living Month, I was proud to show my support by lighting up my home's front entrance in green and blue. It was a wonderful way to shine a spotlight on the incredible work our association does every single day. Here are a few of the fantastic events we've celebrated. The MVACL Kick-Off BBQ was a success even though the weather forced us to move the party indoors, it certainly didn't dampen our spirits! Everyone had a fantastic time enjoying great food, wonderful camaraderie, and even better company. The Trivia Night at Vito's, while I wasn't able to attend in person, I was thrilled to hear it was a super fun evening. A huge congratulations to the members of our Board who took home the win for the night! Awesome job! To close out May, I had the pleasure of attending the Bigger & Better Ball Tournament. It is an incredible annual event. The weather cooperated perfectly, and the games were packed with fantastic, friendly competition. An event as massive as the Ball Tournament doesn't happen without a village. A huge, heartfelt thank you goes out to everyone who helped organize, volunteered their time, or stepped onto the field to participate. You all made it an unforgettable success!

Finally, I am absolutely delighted to hear that our new Cooking Up Connections program—which launched in June for community members aged 55+—is already going incredibly well. It is wonderful to see people coming together to cook delicious food, share meals, and build lasting friendships.

Thank you to our staff, volunteers, board members, and community partners for your ongoing dedication to making MVACL such a vibrant and inclusive community.

As a Board, we are always looking for ways to streamline and improve how we connect with our supporters. We are very excited to share that we are currently working on a system to receive donations via e-transfer in the very near future!

This will make supporting MVACL easier and more accessible than ever before. Please keep an eye out for updates on this exciting new endeavour!



Warm regards,

Joanne



From the Executive Director

We have been fortunate to welcome many new employees this year. At the same time, we are proud that 33% of our employees have been with us for more than 15 years, and 17% have over 20 years of service. This level of commitment reflects the dedication and caring culture that make MVACL such a special place to work.

We recognize that employee retention becomes more challenging during difficult economic times, as people continue to seek the best opportunities to support themselves and their families. With that in mind, we are proud to have introduced a pension plan for our employees in April. Although modest, this important benefit represents an investment in our team and our future. We are pleased to have taken this first step and look forward to seeing the plan grow in the years ahead.

Investing in the future of MVACL extends beyond our workforce. Thanks to successful grant and funding opportunities, several major construction projects have been underway since spring. These improvements will help strengthen our organization and enhance the services we provide for years to come. More details and photos will be shared upon their completion early this fall.

We work diligently every day to find creative ways to increase revenue in order to best support the people we serve and our employees. If you are interested in participating in brainstorming ideas, please send me an email and we will arrange a time to meet. We truly believe we are better together. Your input is welcome and valued.

As we look ahead, I encourage each of you to continue sharing your ideas, identifying opportunities for improvement, and finding creative ways to strengthen our organization. Your voice matters, and your contributions help shape the future of MVACL. We are at our best when we work together.

The people we support are getting out and enjoying the summer, whether through participation in our Challenger Baseball program, attending community events throughout the Valley, or enjoying experiences tailored to their personal interests and wishes. Seeing people engaged, connected, and enjoying meaningful experiences reminds us why our work is so important.

Heat waves, smoke, heavy rainfall, and the rising costs of housing, gas, and food can make it difficult for some people to remain positive. It has been proven that helping others is one of the best ways to lift our spirits. We are fortunate at MVACL to have the opportunity and privilege of helping others every day.

Thank you for all that you do. Together, we continue to make a positive difference in the lives of the people we support and in our community. I am grateful for your dedication, ideas, and commitment to MVACL.

As we move into the fall season, I am excited about the opportunities ahead and confident that, together, we will continue building a stronger future for the people we support, our employees, and our community.

Enjoy the rest of the summer and take good care of yourselves and one another.

Monica





The Healing Power of Helping Others

WHY SERVING OTHERS IS GOOD FOR THEM— AND GOOD FOR US.

For centuries, philosophers, physicians, psychologists, and spiritual leaders have observed a simple truth: when we help others, we often help ourselves. Today, modern research supports this wisdom.

While helping others is not a substitute for professional treatment for depression or other mental health conditions, studies consistently show that acts of kindness and volunteering can improve well-being, reduce symptoms of depression, and foster a greater sense of purpose and connection.



WHAT THE RESEARCH SHOWS

Research has found that people who regularly engage in meaningful acts of service often experience:



GREATER HAPPINESS
and life satisfaction



LOWER LEVELS
of depression and loneliness



INCREASED SENSE
of purpose and meaning



STRONGER SOCIAL CONNECTIONS



BETTER OVERALL MENTAL
and physical well-being

A 2013 systematic review published in BMJ Open, examining 40 studies, concluded that volunteering is associated with improved mental health and greater life satisfaction. More recent reviews of older adults have found that volunteering may reduce symptoms of depression while enhancing overall well-being.

Psychologists suggest that helping others shifts our attention away from excessive self-focus, strengthens our relationships, builds confidence, and reminds us that we have something valuable to contribute.



WORDS OF WISDOM

"The only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve."

— Albert Schweitzer,
physician and Nobel Peace Prize recipient

"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."

— Mahatma Gandhi

*"We make a living by what we get.
We make a life by what we give."*

— Winston Churchill

"Everybody can be great because everybody can serve."

— Martin Luther King Jr.

*"I slept and I dreamed that life was all joy.
I awoke and saw that life was service.
I acted and behold, service was joy."*

— Kahlil Gibran

"Without service, we would not have a strong quality of life. It's important to the person who serves as well as the recipient. It's the way in which we ourselves grow and develop."

— Dorothy Height



A Thought to Carry With You

Helping another person doesn't have to involve grand gestures. A listening ear, a kind word, sharing your time, mentoring someone, checking in on a neighbour, or volunteering in your community can make a meaningful difference—not only in someone else's life, but in yours.

When we lift others, we often find ourselves lifted as well. ♥

