

Our vision is a community where people with disabilities lead active, fulfilling lives and are recognized as contributing members.

A new year (2016) should always bring new goals, new ideas, and a fresh focus for us as Support Workers. Understanding how to advocate for our Individuals has never been more important. At the same time, we want to teach them how to be their own best advocates.

The key to advocacy is creating an environment which is empowering to the people we support. It is crucial to create an atmosphere in which people are free to discuss how they feel without being judged.

Although self-advocacy happens in groups, it begins with you - their Support Worker. You can help them start by letting them know it is OK to disagree with you. Self-advocates need practice standing up for themselves. What better person than you, as their Support Worker, to help them learn self-confidence? Listen to their arguments and let them be the one who is right and you be wrong. You can be that safe environment where they can practice. Help them learn how to be firm, but respectful when they disagree with you.

Help your Individuals develop an awareness of their own strength. This will in turn establish a healthy self-image. We must help them recognize their abilities. Seeing themselves as whole, complete individuals will project self-confidence. We must emphasize what they CAN DO!

As Support Workers we need the ability to teach appropriate skills and abilities which will enable someone to advocate for themselves. It is also important to be willing to be an Advocate on someone's behalf, when they cannot do so for themselves. A safe and secure working environment is essential for growth and development. Our Individuals must be confident we WILL be there for them as Advocates.

Donna Mondeville

Program Director/Executive

Program News:

Campbell River Day Program: 2015 was another great year for the Campbell River Day Program. One of our Individuals celebrated his 60th birthday and another celebrated his 75th!!! Neither seems very eager to retire yet. Everyone had a fun time in planning and celebrating their birthdays at the program.

Summer brought us an abundance of sunshine which allowed for many excursions. Our Individuals enjoyed many outings, such as: mini-golf at Miracle Beach, visits to Seaview Farm, viewing the sandcastles in Parksville, shopping and lunch at Coombs Market, a visit to Butterfly World at Coombs, and picnics at beautiful areas such as: Miracle Beach and McIver Lake. We all just wanted summer to go on forever and ever! In the winter one of our Individuals decided that he wanted to try skiing on Mt. Washington. He tried both, alpine (downhill) and nordic (cross-country) skiing and loved both. We applaud him for trying a new and exciting activity!

One of our long-time Individuals moved to the Victoria area this past year. It can sometimes be difficult to let go of the ones who have become a big part of our lives here, but it is also exciting to see people go on to have new experiences.



We paid tribute to another long-time Individual who passed away in June 2015. Although he was no longer a part of our programs in recent years, he always enjoyed coming to some

*of the parties we held. We share fond memories of him and we miss him greatly.
(submitted by Ruth Kaye, Supervisor)*

Balmoral Residence and Day Program: *Summer of 2015 had been very eventful - particularly the planning of Marion's 80th Birthday!! Marion made it clear back in the spring, that she wanted FIVE (yes, you read this right) FIVE Birthday Cakes to mark the occasion. The great staff got together and offered to bake the cakes. Thanks to Carmen, a big, beautiful pink cake made of cardboard was also on site and we left it up to Jake to "jump" out of it! Marion was thrilled!!!! And yes, we all ate cake - for a while. ☺ Thank you to everyone who turned out that day in August - even though it was the ONLY day it rained all summer! And Thank you Marion, for letting us be a part of your life!*

Sadly, in December we had to say a final good-bye to the "Late Great Owen Takefman" Balmoral was truly his home, and we miss him so. He taught us how to overcome almost anything by being happy. Rest in peace, Owen. (submitted by Tracy Black, Supervisor)

Bridges Contracting: *Our Program had a change in staff and welcomed Pearl Fraser, Laura Morgan and Denise Wells. Bridges Contracting continues to be busy with plenty of contract and individual work. Many members also are going to classes North Island College and to programs at Courtenay Rec-Art Cards, Karate, Sewing Dance, Music and Archery. Bridges has begun an "Employee of the Month" program and Marie designed and made a face frame for its display.*

We had another busy Christmas season; our employers at Regional District again hosted our whole group at Zocalo's for hot drinks, treats and a good visit. The group also went to the tree farm and had a wagon ride through the forest. We got excited about making Christmas crafts this year and were amazed by the results!! We finished the year with our gift exchange and Christmas lunch at the Union Street Grill.

Some special events were: We went to see the new Star Wars Movie during the holiday season and our trips to the new suspension bridge at Elk Falls. Most of us were brave enough to go right across! Our neighbors at the Natural Pastures Cheese Factory invited us to have a tour; we went in small groups to check it out and enjoyed some yummy samples.

We are having our second, annual Foosball tournament. Last year's winner, Bob, is now in the final round - defending his title!

At the end of February Sherri, Joe, Terry and Bob are going to the Special Olympics National Games in Newfoundland. Sherri will compete in Curling and Joe, Terry and Bob will participate in Floor Hockey! We wish them good luck!!! (submitted by Melissa Petlock, Supervisor)

Soderholm: *Our program has been busy over the past six months. With a lot of time and focus spent on various health issues that plagued our Individuals it required a concentrated group effort to get everything moving in the right direction. Even when things are going well - the focus needs to remain the same: stay on task and do not let small issues become big ones.*

Throughout the summer and fall, the Individuals became acquainted with a cat from somewhere in the neighborhood. This cat now considers our home HIS. While the Individuals enjoy the cat inside the house - the furniture did not. We now get to visit him outside.

We enjoyed the beautiful weather, eating meals outside and listening to nature all around. The nice weather went right into fall. Most Sundays we made the trek to the Pier Street Farmers Market, listening to the great musical performers and having healthy snacks along the way. Out of town family visits were arranged and they were a lot of fun and a great success.

In the fall both our Individuals began horseback riding, with one of them riding in Campbell River and the other one in Courtenay. Both are totally enjoying this opportunity and are learning new skills.

The I-pad (Face-time) has been a great way of communicating with family and friends who live out of town. The use of the I-pad has increased this year, and it also helps to create a true emotional connection.

Christmas is always a high-light at Soderholm. Everyone contributes to make the home festive. Special music and movies add to the ambience. Our Christmas parties are always a hit with the Individuals who live there. We also went to Courtenay to have dinner and do a

big Christmas shop. There were other activities and events that involved looking at the lights, having a nice meal and get into the Christmas Spirit.

We are now looking forward to spring and all the fun things we plan to do! (Submitted by Peggy Malley, Supervisor/Executive)

Staff Updates:

*Future Focus Program Services hired **25 new** employees in 2015 and 2016 (1st quarter), however, 15 staff members left us over the same amount of time. A lot of time, money, energy and effort goes into selecting, hiring and training new staff. Not everyone is capable of working in this field and we are thankful for the many hard-working and loyal employees we employ at Future Focus.*

As part of our strategic planning in Technology, we collected everyone's email addresses to be able to conduct our Employee Satisfaction Survey on-line. The survey -link will be sent to everyone via email and the anonymous responses will be tabulated and used to move forward as a company. Another goal in technology was to offer internet access to our Individuals if they so choose.

Currently, there are 42 active employees, and 10 employees who are off on various leaves of absences.

Other News: *As of April 1, 2016 we are operating the brand-new, state-of the -art, VIHA -licensed facility, GATEHOUSE RESIDENCE in Courtenay. It was a mad dash for the Program Director, Supervisor and staff of Balmoral to get the home ready for the move and set up at Gatehouse. The remaining two Individuals of Balmoral now enjoy the beautiful surroundings and support, and we are welcoming two new Individuals in the next few weeks. We believe to be at full capacity (5 Residents) by the fall of 2016.*

To say good-bye (for now), to Balmoral, was bitter-sweet. This home was a true home to many and holds an incredible amount of history and beautiful stories. However, we are working hard at finding another use for "the old girl" as we believe she is not done yet!! Keep your eyes posted!

CARF Accreditation - coming to a program near you in the fall 2017!! This will be here sooner than later and we will need everyone's support to get another 3-years accreditation.

(submitted by Doris Wagner, HR Manager)