

Living with a Servant Heart

enVision Foundation's

Make a Difference Celebration Goes Virtual

ENVISION NEWSLETTER • SPRING 2021



enVision
community living

Community Connection

enVision Community Living is a non-profit community-based organization committed to delivering supports and services that provide people who live with an intellectual disability opportunities for personal growth and development and opportunities to live the life of their choosing in the community.

The Director's Message



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Jeannette DeLong

The impacts of the coronavirus came quickly when in March 2020 we were informed by the Department of Families that our Day Services needed to close. At the time we thought that perhaps this closure would be for a few short weeks, or at the most a few months. We had no idea that one year later our Day Services would, for the most part, still remain closed.

The second clue that everything was about to change was the swift movement to require use of eye shields and masks for all staff. Then all access to the community, and visits with family and friends, got shut down for people we serve – restrictions beyond what was required of the rest of the community.

These three changes had a huge impact on us. People we serve had to stay home, not fully understanding why life came to a grinding halt. Staff had to adapt to what felt like a medical model of service delivery, and anxiety increased when family members could no longer see each other in person.

So much credit goes to our staff for adapting to these changes, and helping people we serve to adapt. Our staff have been incredibly creative, optimistic, and dedicated to ensuring a good life for people we serve, despite the circumstances.

Then at the end of September, we were hit with our first positive case of COVID. Very quickly, we learned that responding to COVID would require a multi-disciplinary team approach. We are grateful for the support of Public Health, as well as the Dept. of Families, as together we met the challenges of multiple positive COVID cases among people we serve and our staff.

We are grateful that our staff team stepped up to help in any way they could. Staff who had never worked with certain people stepped up to say they would support those they did not know. In some situations, our staff moved into the house to care for people. Some staff chose not to go home to their families, opting to live in enVision's respite apartments for the two weeks while they supported someone in isolation. I cannot express how humbled I am at the dedication and generosity of our staff. They have truly gone above and beyond to ensure the best possible outcomes for people we serve.

Although we have had tremendous team efforts to address this pandemic, from Direct Support Professionals to senior management, it's been a long year and fatigue is setting in. We are honoured to ensure the safety of vulnerable people, but we also need to acknowledge the risk our staff face in coming to work each day.

People we serve have faced increased isolation and loneliness.

It's been very difficult for many to understand the reasons to not go out, and we see the mental health impact that this has caused. We have to get back to community living, being connected, and finding places to belong.

Despite fears that restrictions would take the community living movement back by decades, we are grateful that the provincial government kept our folks as a priority. The early directive for staff to wear masks and eye shields has no doubt saved many from becoming sick and perhaps even from death. The provincial wage top ups for our staff were well deserved. Some of our staff and the people we serve are being identified as priorities for vaccination. In all of this, we need to acknowledge the tremendous work of Abilities Manitoba in keeping our sector at the forefront of government decisions.

We have been fortunate to date to not have lost any lives to COVID within enVision, but we do mourn with people we serve and our staff due to the loss of family members and friends. We also mourn the loss of people who had dedicated much time and support to our organization.

We do have opportunities now that would not have presented themselves without the pandemic. We are imagining what the new normal is going to be. Just like other sectors with congregate models of service delivery, we have to consider how we can meet needs in a safer way. We are slowly moving out of crisis mode and getting back to fulfilling our purpose of inspiring equality, inclusion and value for people we serve. We have hope for the future!



Living with a Servant Heart

When you are born with a servant heart, it's quite likely you will find a career that allows you to use your gifts to make a difference in someone else's life. This is what Bernice Friesen is experiencing.

Bernice works fulltime at enVision as a Direct Support Professional in the Supported Independent Living Program (SIL) and she is coming up to her 10 year anniversary with the organization. That is a commitment that calls for recognition and celebration, especially in our field.

After a career in nursing that spanned longer than 20 years, Bernice decided to adjust her focus and ended up on the enVision staff team. This took a fair amount of convincing from one of her friends due to Bernice's apprehension. She did not think she was qualified for this work.

"I didn't think I could do it," she admits. While Bernice hesitated, her friend did not give up. Bernice submitted an application form and was hired to work in SIL. And she will tell you that it's a joy to be part of a team comprised of like-minded people who share her passion of servanthood.

"It amazes me, it's so easy to work with this staff team," Bernice says. "We all have the same goals and I think that is what makes it easy to work with each staff member. When I am training new staff, it's easy because they all have the same passion as the seasoned staff members."

"It's amazing. It feels like we are a community, a family," she says. "We all have the same motives."

Bernice has formed friendships with many people on her team and she values each relationship.

"You can plan together and problem-solve together. Often, the thoughts come at the same time to each of us, and we are all very understanding."

Bernice credits the enVision training sessions to help get everyone on the same wave-length, all working toward common goals, which results in a solid and successful team.

All the medical knowledge and experience Bernice acquired over the years is continuously put to good use. Her gifts of compassion and encouragement also go a long way in providing a positive impact for people who are often overlooked in society.



Judy Funk

MANAGER, enVision's Supported Independent Living Program

"Relationships are so important," Bernice says as she explains the reason she works hard to build trust with people she supports. "I realize how important it is to have some understanding...you have to put yourself in their shoes. There's lots to learn. And when you are aware that people you support have so much trust in you, that's a big deal. It motivates me to give my best each day. You don't want to break that trust with anyone."

Bernice has the ability to connect with anyone, regardless of their age or culture. This might be due to the amount of acceptance and encouragement she offers to everyone around her.

When she is asked what motivates her to continue working in this field, Bernice says, "I love my work. I love people. If there is anything I can do to help a person to have a better day, a better life....that's what is behind it."

SIL is a program where there are constant changes and staff are expected to adapt and adjust on a daily basis to respond in a manner that offers quality support to each person for what their needs are in each moment. This seems to work really well for Bernice.

"It's never boring," she says. "No two days are the same. I like that. My slogan is 'Variety is the Spice of Life' and I like the variety of what each day brings."

Bernice is a humble servant and it is an honour to serve with her, to learn from her and to be encouraged by her.



enVision Foundation's Make a Difference Celebration Goes Virtual

The enVision Foundation hosted its second annual Make a Difference Celebration this fall in combination with the endeavour to raise funds to build a new accessible home. While once again honouring 9 deserving members of our community, things were a little different than our celebration in 2019. With the inability to host large gatherings due to COVID-19, the enVision Foundation went virtual, creating a 7 day-7 short film extravaganza beginning on September 25, 2020. Each day a beautifully crafted film by Awaken

Collective premiered, sponsored by Fairway Specialty Vehicles and Solomon's Furniture and Appliances, giving tribute to one honouree and their achievements in inspiring equality, inclusion and the value of all people within our community.

This year's honourees were: Damaris Krahn, Dusty Buchan, Justine Charette, Merle Gadsby, Dennis Coley, Barry Piasta and our Young Change Makers: Finley Hiebert, Zoé Bardal and the Grade 1W Class of Blumenort School.

Thank you to our
Make A Difference Sponsors

Solomon's
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Fairway
SPECIALTY VEHICLES

AWAKEN
COLLECTIVE

Meet enVision Foundation's 2020 Make a Difference Honourees



Damaris Krahn

Damaris is a smart, fearless change maker who defies perceptions and creates awareness as to what is possible regardless of disability or circumstance. This adrenalin seeking, YouTuber and writer, who speaks five different languages advocates for not only herself but other people with disabilities. You can often find Damaris at a local Piston hockey game cheering on her favourite team, she is definitely their #1 fan! Above all, Damaris teaches you that ability is bigger than disability and even though Damaris cannot communicate vocally, she has a loud and powerful voice!

Merle Gadsby

Merle is a retired teacher and the Regional leader and head coach for track and field of the Steinbach Special Olympics Chapter. Merle has coached and developed dozens of athletes to compete at local, national and international levels, supporting people to develop character, resilience and self-confidence. People have increased opportunity and quality of life because of her mentorship and coaching.





Lindsay Umrau
FUNDRAISING &
PROMOTIONS COORDINATOR

Awards were given to the honourees at small outdoor gatherings with comedian Matt Falk as the emcee. Special guests invited to present awards were: Mayor Earl Funk from the City of Steinbach, Paul Reimer from Klassen Financial Services, Corny Rempel from Mix 96.7 FM . A big thank-you goes out to our award presenters for taking the time to honour our very deserving honourees this year!

There's still time to view enVision Foundation's 2020 Make a Difference films! Visit enVision Community Living's website at www.envisioncl.com or subscribe for free to enVision Foundation on YouTube.



Justine Charette

Justine is a shining light and brings a breath of fresh air to everyone she meets. Justine loves to be engaged with her co-workers and has a tremendous sense of humour. Whether she's working at SNJ Law office, HSD student services, Golden West, Century 21 or volunteering at Woodlawn School, Justine brings joy and positivity to each situation she is in.



Dennis Coley

Dennis has tirelessly volunteered at South-east Helping Hands for the last 10 years. He is a hard worker, is loyal and he really cares about others. Dennis believes that we are called to serve and to help our neighbours. His passion stems from the opportunity to get to know people from all different walks of life, knowing that we are all from the same community. Dennis is exceptional at valuing people equally and he helps people find a sense of belonging and acceptance where others may turn them away.

**Thank you to
our presenters...**



Paul Reimer
Klassen Financial Services



Mayor Earl Funk
City of Steinbach



Corny Rempel
Mix 96.7 FM



Matt Falk
Comedian



Dusty Buchan

Dusty is a passionate writer, speaker, role model and activist for human rights. Dusty has a vibrant personality and is eager to live life to the fullest. He wants to make the world a better place and achieves that by the work that he does with The Rights Committee, Disability Matters Vote, People First, enVision Community Living and by giving public presentations. Dusty gives people hope by acting as a role model for people living with Prader-Willi Syndrome by sharing his personal struggles and how he continues to overcome them. Dusty believes that everyone should be treated equally and if we all work together, we can make a better world for all.

Barry Piasta

Barry believes that to truly be part of a community, you have to participate in protecting everyone's value. Whether that be rallying the community together to enhance safety measures, planning and coordinating events to raise money for those in need, or creating safe places for community involvement, Barry is a tremendous force in his community for making positive change. Barry inspires community to join together to create equality, inclusion and the value of all people by recognizing injustices and stepping up to help fix them.



Young Change Makers: Zoé Bardal, Finley Hiebert and the Grade 1W class of Blumenort

Zoé recognized an opportunity to give something of herself to make life better for someone else by donating her hair to create a wig for a child with cancer. Finley erases the line that is so often put between people who live with a disability and those who do not have a disability. The Grade 1W class collectively learned sign language so that they could create an inclusive environment for all their classmates. They learned that being inclusive benefits everyone and provides a space for each person to contribute their gifts and talents.

A Place to Grow *enVision's Respite Services*

The enVision Foundation, the fundraising body supporting the work of enVision Community Living met their goal and raised \$90,000 in 2019-2020 for the development and operation of a new respite residence! With help from individual donors and local businesses, we met our fundraising needs and were able to complete renovations by May 2020. We cannot thank our dedicated supporters enough, as they continue to help us fulfill our vision to inspire equality, inclusion and the value of all people!

What is a respite residence and why is it so important? A respite residence offers people who live with an intellectual disability the option to have respite outside of their family home and in a comfortable home-like setting. Respite provides opportunities for the person with a disability to develop new skills and build confidence to live independently in the community. It provides families and caregivers the opportunity for a temporary break from caregiving and to spend some time in self-care.

Since opening our first respite apartment in 2014, the need and usage had steadily grown, and we reached the point that families were on a waiting list to access the apartment.

enVision was presented with an opportunity to grow our respite services after purchasing a bi-level house located in Steinbach, close to many amenities and in walking distance of a park.

The upper level was developed as a permanent home for someone enVision serves and we could see the potential for the lower level as a respite residence. But work was needed to turn it into a bright, welcoming apartment that could be a home away from home. This is where Carlon Yoder from Hands on Renovations stepped in. He got started on the project with new flooring, lighting, a bathroom expansion, and a complete kitchen install. The opening between the kitchen and living room was increased

to provide an open airy feel. The addition of fresh paint brightened and updated the rooms, creating a positive and welcoming environment. We now have an 1100 square foot, two-bedroom apartment

with laundry facilities and a kitchen that provides all the comforts of home, ready for people who need a location for respite.

In addition to all the inside renovations, it was apparent that replacing shingles was a necessity. enVision was fortunate to have some help with this endeavour! The labour to replace shingles was donated by Jerry Harder of MAP Roofing in Niverville. We cannot thank Jerry enough for this donation and for all the hard work to help make our project a success!

enVision now has two respite apartments that fulfill a need for people to receive respite supports away from home. They can also be used in emergency situations when there is a breakdown with the person's permanent living situation. The apartments can be used for someone to learn valuable skills for independent living, like cooking and household tasks, as they prepare to move out of the family home into a place of their own.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, enVision's respite services have been put on pause temporarily, but we are incredibly excited to start taking reservations once things open up. There is no cost to use either of enVision's respite apartments however people are required to provide their own respite worker if needed. If you are interested in learning more about this enVision service, please connect with Briana Letkeman from enVision's Eastman Employment Services @ 204-326-4099 or by e-mailing briana@eastmanemployment.com



Karen Penner
PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR





Celebrating the Importance of *enVision's* Direct Support Professionals

In the Spring, we began feeling the full effects of COVID-19 – we were isolated from our loved ones and our communities. As an organization dedicated to building and sustaining community, these effects were devastating. The people we support, who we had worked so hard to build community with, were stuck at home with staff whose faces were now covered in masks and eye shields, and their only connections to the outside world were digital. What had the world we were striving for become, we asked.

As a way to salve our collective lament, the enVision team got to work to imagine a way to connect with the people we serve

and our staff, to remind them that we are all in this together. We decided that we would purchase baskets of flowers for each of our homes and day services, and deliver them as an administrative team. We each donned our enVision shirts, masks, and eye-shields; decorated our cars; picked up our pom-poms; and, hit the road.

We are so grateful to Giz's Garden Centre for providing us such stunning flowers on short notice, which, as a result of our escapades, ended up beautifying all of our locations. It was a day full of joy and friendly faces, and we continue to hold on to the memories of that day to get us through the continued



Katelyn Dykstra
DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

challenges of COVID-19 in our communities.

Many of the friendly faces we saw during our “parade” to all of our locations were staff. Our Direct Support Professionals are the foundation of what we do at enVision; they provide support to the people we serve and do much of the day-to-day advocacy that has the ability to change lives.

As a show of our appreciation, and as part of an international Direct Support Professional Recognition Week, we provided our DSPs with a free meal on September 10, 2020! We partnered with Bigg Smoak Bbq Smokehouse & Grill in Steinbach to set up their food truck at Kindale and Eastman Recycling Services, where we honoured all of our DSPs –

COVID-style. DSPs picked up their pulled-pork sandwiches, salad, and drink, and headed to parks, back to work, or home to their families.

We were grateful that some of our Coordinators and our Directors also joined in with Jeannette Delong to take this opportunity to meet some of our staff – socially distanced, of course – and have a laugh together in the line up to the truck.

We are so very proud of our DSPs. This year has been so challenging for everyone, but our staff have really stepped up to provide quality supports to the people we serve. Thank you, again, to all of them!

Recognizing Years of Service

Thank you for your service and dedication



Peter Neufeld

After 28 years of service to enVision, our friend Peter Neufeld is hanging up his tool belt and retiring!

There was no job too big or too small for Peter and we are grateful for the many hours spent keeping our building and property maintenance up to par. Thank-you Peter for your kindness and dedication, happy retirement!



James Bell

With 22 years of service, enVision would like to thank our friend and co-worker James Bell for his dedication and sincere passion to ensuring the best possible life for the people we serve. James's advocacy and commitment has made such a positive impact for many people over the years and for this, we celebrate and thank him. One of James's gifts is the ability to communicate through sign language. Watching James communicate through this medium is inspiring and so appreciated in a service like ours.

James, we wish you the very best in your future endeavours.

Connect with us on Social Media!

 @envisioncl  @envisioncl  @envisioncl  enVision Community Living  enVision Foundation



Annual General Meeting 2021

Save the date for our virtual AGM!

June 15, 2021

Membership Matters

Embracing our differences because everyone belongs!



Your membership expresses your support of enVision Community Living's mission to inspire equality, inclusion and the value of all people.

Each member of enVision Community Living brings with them a personal connection to our mission. They contribute talent, time and insight into helping guide enVision's services. We value all members and the contribution they make to providing quality services to people who live with a disability.

Membership gives you the privilege of voting in regards to matters raised at the annual general meeting (AGM), held each June. A single membership gives an individual one vote, and a family membership gets two votes. Members will receive notice of the AGM in the mail, and also have the option to receive newsletters by mail or email.

Individual Membership \$10 | 1 Vote

Family Membership \$15 | 2 Votes

Sign-up to Become a Member!

You can sign-up to become a member by visiting us at envisioncl.com/become-a-member



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If you would like to receive your copy of enVision's Community Connection newsletter by email, please notify our Fundraising Coordinator at Lindsay@envisioncl.com

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Legacy

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Make A Difference. Make Your Donation.

In 2020-21 we're raising funds to support the construction of a new accessible home! An accessible home offers one-level living, a no-step entrance, wider doorways and hallways, and wheelchair accessible bathrooms for people living with a disability. We invite you to support the construction of this new home by making a donation.

Your donation will help break down barriers and empower people in our community to live more independently.



HELP US REACH THE LAST

\$10,000

enVision
foundation (2012) inc.

SUPPORTING PEOPLE IN OUR COMMUNITY

Accessibility at home is essential for increased independence for people living with a disability. Your donation will help create a more inclusive community.

Yes! I want to support people in our community!

Name: _____

City: _____

Prov: _____ Postal: _____

Signature: _____

My enclosed donation:

☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$75 ☐ Other: \$ _____

Or, I would like to help enVision with my monthly contribution (void cheque enclosed):

☐ \$20 ☐ \$30 ☐ \$50 ☐ Other: \$ _____

Monthly donations will be processed on the 15th of each month.



Fill out this form and return to the enVision Foundation, 84 Brandt Street, Steinbach MB R5G 0E1
You can also make your donation online by visiting www.envisioncl.com