

enVision Community Living

FALL/WINTER NEWSLETTER 2024 - 2025

Community Connection

enVision exists to inspire equality, inclusion and the value of all people



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OF DESPAIR: ELIZABETH
FRIESEN'S STORY**

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NAT'L. DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH

Supporting inclusion and disability employment awareness

A photograph of two young men smiling and looking towards the camera. They are outdoors, with trees and a building in the background. The man on the left is wearing glasses and a dark shirt, while the man on the right is wearing a blue and white striped shirt.

We exist to inspire equality, inclusion, and the value of all people.

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 Executive Vision



The people we serve continue to impress us with their resilience in the face of challenges, and their capacity to grow. In this newsletter, you will see how the work of enVision unleashes the potential of the people we serve. How we address the aspirations of people. And, how we help them to live a life of their choosing.

There was a joyful celebration on December 3, 2024, for everyone involved in the community living movement. After decades of advocacy, human rights complaints, and listening to people's stories of abuse and mistreatment, the last person finally moved out of the Manitoba Developmental Centre and into the community. The government listened and the institution is now closed!

For too long, people who live with an intellectual disability have been underestimated and treated as less than human. You will read Elizabeth's moving story about what she has endured in her life and the hope that she has for her future. The closure of the institution means that the fear of being sent back can finally be set aside.

Each day the people we serve teach us that assumptions about limitations are invalid. The limitations that people face are often due to the attitudes of others who do not believe in the potential of people. This low expectation results in opportunities not being offered to people and even being denied. enVision started almost 70 years ago because of the belief that people who live with an intellectual disability can learn and grow. To this day, enVision's employees actively seek opportunities to unleash the potential of the people we serve.

A great example of the belief that people can learn is the creation of enVision's Digital Lending Library. This offers an opportunity for people to gain more skills. We are excited to see how the use of technology can open the doors to increased independence for the people we serve.

enVision has changed a lot over the years in how we provide supports and services. The things that have remained constant are our belief in the capacity of people to grow, the importance of listening to what people say is important to them, and fulfilling our responsibility to open the doors to opportunity. We invite you to be engaged with our work and join us in inspiring equality, inclusion, and the value of all people.

Jeannette DeLong

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

enVision's Digital Lending Library: Helping People Build Independence Through Technology

By Janice Munro, Director of Services

Have you ever tried a free sample at the grocery store? It is a quick way to see if you like something before spending your money. Now imagine being able to do that with expensive technology designed to help people living with an intellectual disability live more independently. That is exactly what enVision's **Digital Lending Library** is all about!

This program allows people to borrow tools like communication devices, noise-canceling earplugs, or even smart medication dispensers to see if they meet their needs before buying them. It is a way to try out new technology without taking a big financial risk. The idea for this program came from people asking: *What if we could test expensive devices before investing in them?* enVision's leadership team applied for a grant from the **Steinbach Community Foundation**, which supports projects that help the community and meet local needs.

On June 26, 2024, enVision was thrilled to receive an **\$8,118** grant, the largest one given by the Steinbach Community Foundation this year! The money is being used to buy helpful tools like iPads, automated medication dispensers, adaptive mice, and communication devices such as the GoTalk Lite 20+.



Janice Munro, Dir. of Services, holding a material about MedReady

These tools help people communicate better, organize their daily routines, and gain independence. So how does the library work? People can visit **enVision's office at 84 Brandt Street** to see a binder showing all available devices. Once they choose a device, they can borrow it, try it out, and even receive training on how to use it. Apps like *Look, Cook, and Eat* (for learning to cook) or *Cash Reader* (to identify money) can also be installed on devices if needed. After each loan, the devices are cleaned and reset to be ready for the next user. This project is about more than lending devices, it is about changing lives.

For years, people with an intellectual disability have been underestimated, especially when it comes to learning new technology. enVision wants to show that, with the right tools, everyone can become more independent and engaged in their community.

Even in the early stages of the Digital Lending Library, we already see so much potential in helping the people we support gain independence. One of the devices in our library called MedReady Automated Medication Dispenser, an automated medicine dispenser with a 24-hour monitoring device that prevents overdose. John (not his real name), a person we support who is at risk of overdose was recently cleared by his doctor to use this device. This device means freedom and independence for John to take his medication without supervision, giving autonomy and control back into his hands.

enVision is also learning from other organizations in Manitoba, like the Jake Epp Public Library and Manitoba Possible, to ensure the program runs smoothly. By Spring 2025, enVision hopes to expand the library and continue helping people. Stay tuned for updates and success stories along the way.

If you would like to help, you can donate devices, money, or ideas to support the library. Contact Janice Munro at janice@envisioncl.com or call (204) 326-7539. If you have any experience borrowing from our Digital Lending Library, we would love to hear from you as well. Together, we can create a future where everyone has access to the tools they need to succeed!

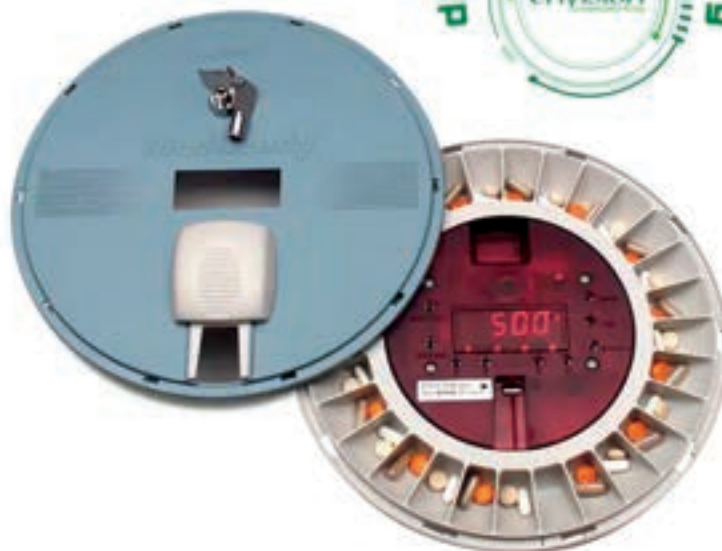


Photo of a MedReady Medication Dispenser

Source: <https://bit.ly/42aH4Fp>



When: June 17, 2025

Where: Mennonite Heritage Village

Time: 5:30 p.m.

Please mark your calendars!

By Louise Carrière
Communications Associate/ Fundraising Coordinator



Laughter and Generosity Light Up enVision Foundation's Comedy & Canapés Night

enVision Foundation's first in-person fundraising event in two years,
a resounding success



Writer-Comedian Dean Jenkinson performing at enVision Foundation's Comedy & Canapés fundraising night.

On November 8, 2024, the enVision Foundation brought the house down with its Comedy & Canapés fundraiser. It was a memorable evening of laughter, community, and generosity. Held at The Edge Lounge in Steinbach, this event was much more than a comedy night—it was a heartwarming display of support for people living with an intellectual disability and mobility challenges.

The fundraiser combined good humour with good food while supporting a great cause. We welcomed a full house of close to 150 supporters who share enVision's mission of inspiring equality, inclusion, and the value of all people.

The event's highlight was the performance by award-winning comedian Dean Jenkinson, who had the audience laughing from start to finish. With his sharp wit and relatable humour, Dean delivered a stand-up routine that left attendees in stitches while highlighting the evening's purpose: to raise funds to replace an accessible vehicle that is more than 10 years old and beyond repair.

It was heartwarming to see the generosity of everyone present, as they contributed not just by buying tickets but also through sponsorships and donations. enVision's Executive Director, Jeannette DeLong, shared about the impact of accessible transportation on the people served by enVision.



The urgency of the need for accessible transportation is felt when one must be able to get to places to take advantage of opportunities. Opportunities for building family relationships, getting a job, taking part in church, getting to medical appointments and so much more. The evening also served as the official kick-off for the **Bridge_theGap Annual Fundraising Campaign**, which aims to meet the pressing needs of the people we support especially needs that are not covered by provincial funding.

The fundraiser raised close to **\$16,000**, bringing the Foundation closer to its goal of buying a new accessible vehicle. The generosity on display was not just monetary, it was a testament to the deep-rooted care and compassion of this community.

As we continue to raise funds, one beneficiary of this generosity is Justin. We look forward to seeing him have the freedom to explore more museums and galleries that fuel his imagination and enjoy the little things in life such as an afternoon tea that makes his eyes sparkle with joy. For Justin and others who rely on accessible vehicles for mobility, these accessible wheels spell the difference between being limited to the four walls of their home and having the means to live their lives to the fullest.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who attended, donated, or sponsored the event. Together, we are making a difference in the lives of individuals living with an intellectual disability, ensuring they can access the resources to thrive in our community.



For those who missed the event but would like to support our accessible vehicle fundraising drive, donations are still being accepted - visit www.envisioncl.com/donate. Thank you for helping us turn laughter into meaningful change. We cannot wait to see you at our next event!



Justin Wintoniw, one of the beneficiaries of this year's Bridge_theGap Annual Fundraising campaign for an accessible vehicle, proudly shows off a picnic table he sanded and stained on his own at Kindale Industries.

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COMEDY
&
CANAPÉS
FOR 4

Help raise funds for the purchase of an accessible vehicle and have fun doing it!

Thank you to our Community Impact Partners!



Solomon's
Furniture and Appliances



MIKEFAST TEAM
ROYAL LEPAGE
Riverbend Realty

Thank you for joining us in
supporting enVision!



The RIVR Financial Team

(L-R: Laura-Lee Mitchell, Devyn Bartel, Stephanie
Froese, Paul Reimer, and Taylor Hiebert)

Don't miss the March 3rd RRSP
contribution deadline!
Reach out to RIVR Financial for expert
retirement planning guidance today!



Be a friend.
Volunteer.



Be the change you want to see.
Scan the QR code now!

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Behind the Scenes

The Community Based Assisted Decision-Making (CBADM) Pilot Project is a two-year initiative funded by Manitoba's Department of Families and implemented by the 120 Maryland Group. This project aims to empower individuals with intellectual disabilities by fostering peer and support networks, encouraging the use of community-based decision-making, and reducing dependency on the Public Guardian and Trustee. For this project, they interviewed three people we support along with their Substitute Decision Makers: Margaret & Sara, Marcel & David, and Sharon & Lena. All the interviewees shared how a simple invitation to be part of someone's life blossomed into true and lasting friendship. enVision Executive Director Jeannette DeLong tied the stories together by providing context to the role and responsibilities of an SDM.



Sara & Margaret



David & Marcel



Lena & Sharon



Jeannette DeLong, enVision Executive Director

Resiliency in the Face of Despair: Elizabeth Friesen's Journey to Freedom

By Louise Carrière
Communications Associate/ Fundraising Coordinator

"What the hell?" Those were the first words Liz uttered as I shook her hand when we first met, startled by my 'chirpy' greeting. In those few seconds of meeting her, you immediately know that she's a no-nonsense woman who's ready to serve you her thoughts on a platter. For those who do not know her, her tough exterior hides almost a lifetime of trauma. But despite living through a painful past, she exudes quiet confidence, resilience, and resolve.

Life Inside the Manitoba Developmental Centre

Life seemed like one misfortune after another - a series of painful, unfortunate events for Elizabeth Friesen. Elizabeth or Liz, as she is known to those close to her, moved in with her grandmother and auntie when she was five. But after only five years of living with her grandmother and auntie, rejection came knocking on her door. According to Liz, the trusted women in her life no longer wanted to care for her, so they sent her to live in a foster home. When that did not work out, she was placed inside the Manitoba Developmental Centre (MDC) where her harrowing journey continued.

The Manitoba Developmental Centre (MDC) was founded during during an era when institutionalization was considered the primary approach to house people with developmental and intellectual disabilities.



Elizabeth relaxes by unleashing her creative side making dreamcatchers that she gives to family & friends.

They put you in a lock-up. They put a needle in my arm and put me to sleep lots of times." Liz and other individuals living with a disability in the institution describe the lock-up as an isolated place where they were confined when they disobeyed the staff or refused to clean the filthy walls and bathrooms.

"We had no beds, no sheets, no pillow, nothing there. We just slept on the floor. I was cold," said Liz as she described her lock-up experience. Aside from doing daily chores, Liz recalls they all worked for free and could not enjoy anything from their hard labour since they weren't allowed to keep any money. Life inside the MDC was difficult for Liz, "You had to share the bathroom, the two bathtubs. There was no privacy - nothing. There was a male staff there, he would handle everybody. I told him to get out and leave us alone. But he wouldn't leave us." Male or female, the staff was with the individuals constantly, no matter where they went, even when they needed privacy.

There wasn't a shortage of disturbing events

for Liz to witness inside the MDC. One of them happened to Liz's best friend, Joyce, who climbed up the water tower during winter and fell to her death. "I told her to come down, everybody said, jump, jump! The nurses were so mean to her that's why she jumped down. Nobody helped her", recounted Liz with tears in her eyes.

After this painful event, Liz ran away from the Centre a total of eight times. But each time, the police would catch her and bring her back to the institution, "I told the police I didn't want to go back. They said you must go back, you have no place to go."

Life After the Manitoba Developmental Centre

Throughout her stay, Liz said that she never felt understood or supported inside the Manitoba Developmental Centre. After submitting to the 'rules', she was finally released after more than 15 years of living in the institution, "I had to obey them and not run away. They put me in a foster home in Steinbach. I felt free but I wasn't so happy about it because I had to obey the rules and what they told me."

At 25 years old, Liz was finally out of the institution, and despite feeling controlled, Liz said she was still happy that she was free and had a sense of control over her life. Liz was eventually referred to enVision Community Living where she found the support she needed to rebuild her life.

enVision supports individuals like Liz to live independently through our Supported Independent Living (SIL) service by helping them find a suitable place to live, assist in grocery shopping, prepare meals, do banking, create social connections, and a whole lot more. Through the SIL service, supported individuals are able to live independently with minimal support and have the opportunity to enrich their lives within the community.

For Liz, it's more than just freedom, it's regaining her dignity, "Now, I'm on my own. I'm free at last, I don't have to think about this anymore. I feel happy I can do things I want. I've got a two-bedroom



Photo of the Manitoba Development Centre's toilet
From Online News Article: "\$50M lawsuit alleges intellectually disabled residents were sexually abused, starved at Manitoba institution" by Laura Glowacki for CBC, December 19, 2018

house, a living room, a kitchen and a dishwasher. I'm happy I've got good staff on my side. I've got friends I can look after. It feels so good!"

Liz loves to be out and about. One day she goes out for coffee with friends and the next day shopping even during winter. In the summertime, you will find her out for walks in the park or hanging out in the mall. She loves watching movies with friends or simply enjoying time on her own, "I'm retired. I enjoy my life, doing things for myself. I also have a bird that I look after. Her name is Leslie", says Liz with a satisfied smile on her face.

When she's not outside enjoying the sun or the company of friends, Liz is busy with her favorite hobby, making dreamcatchers. When asked how much she enjoys her hobby, Liz says, "I've created maybe a hundred of these. I just give them to friends".

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed individuals can change the world. In fact, it’s the only thing that ever has”.

- Margaret Mead

From a History of Pain to Changing History

Liz is using her painful past to change the course of history for individuals who were forced to live in the Manitoba Developmental Centre. She is part of a documentary entitled, “These Four Walls” directed by Branden DeFoort. The film delves into the remarkable journey of David Weremy as he takes on the Manitoba Developmental Centre through a groundbreaking class action lawsuit, uncovering a painful legacy of mistreatment and neglect in government-run care. Through vivid personal accounts and evocative storytelling, it reveals the untold struggles of survivors, families, and advocates determined to confront a painful and hidden past. At its core, this is a story of triumph over adversity - an inspiring testament to human strength, the power of community, and the pursuit of freedom and justice that paves the way for a brighter, boundless future. When she met others who went through the same ordeal as her, Liz said, “They were telling me how they were badly mistreated too. I told them to keep those memories, don’t give up on it yet – it’s not yet torn down.”

On December 10, 2024, Human Rights Day the celebration in Manitoba was extra special as the government announced the closure of the Manitoba Developmental Centre. The institution finally shut its doors, ending over a century of Manitoba’s forced confinement and segregation of individuals living with an intellectual disability from the community. Yet the fight for true



Liz preparing spring rolls in her own kitchen

equality, inclusion, and the value of all people continues for people who live with an intellectual disability and for organizations like enVision.

At the end of our interview, Liz raised her hand, showing defiance against the institution that traumatized her for more than a decade. It wasn’t an easy path to freedom, but she emerged a winner because of her determination and courage to fight for her right to be heard and be free from anyone’s control.

Now that this nightmare is behind her, with a victorious smile, she declares, **“I feel powerful and beautiful, and I am strong.”**

“What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.”

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Celebrating Direct Support Professionals: A Week of Appreciation



By Louise Carrière
Communications Associate/ Fundraising Coordinator

We are inspired by the compassion and dedication that define our Direct Support Professionals. Their work is essential to the well-being and growth of the people we support, and we cannot thank them enough for all they do. That's why Direct Support Professional (DSP) Recognition Week is a special time for us to celebrate the amazing work of DSPs who support people living with an intellectual disability.

During DSP Week 2024, we posted daily tributes on social media to honour enVision's DSPs. The messages came from Executive Director Jeannette DeLong, senior leadership, coordinators, and even some of the individuals we support. Each tribute highlighted the incredible impact the DSPs have on people's lives and their families.

The highlight of the week was **YouMatter Day**, a fun-filled event dedicated to our hardworking DSPs. The day included great food, exciting games, and fantastic prizes—all designed to say "thank you" for the care and dedication they bring to their roles every day. The event was even more memorable thanks to the support of our local partners. Their contributions showed just how much the community values the essential work enVision's DSPs do.

One of the most exciting parts of YouMatter Day was the chance for DSPs to win prizes.

These giveaways added an extra layer of fun and were a small token of our gratitude for their commitment and hard work. It was wonderful to see the smiles and excitement as the winners claimed their prizes.

Caitlyn Preteau, a DSP for 11 years, finds fulfillment in helping the people she supports to live their best lives. To her, being able to make a difference in someone's life is a good feeling to have at the end of the day. She is thankful to enVision for every year that the organization honours the DSPs, "Sometimes work can get hard but it's nice to know that we're appreciated, and we're seen for what we do."

While DSP Recognition Week is all about honouring and thanking our DSPs, it is also a time to reflect on the ongoing need for community support and advocacy. DSPs play a crucial role in building a community where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. DSPs present and facilitate opportunities for people to learn new skills in a variety of areas. They assist people to achieve personal goals, contribute to and participate in the community, and to develop relationships with others.

At enVision, we are dedicated to creating a supportive environment not only for the people we serve but also for the Direct Support Professionals who make it all possible. Together, we can continue to celebrate and support these amazing professionals who make our community stronger and more inclusive.

National Disability Employment Awareness Month 2024

Supporting Inclusion and Disability Employment Awareness

By Louise Carriere
Communications Associate, Fundraising Coordinator

Did you know? October is known as Employment Awareness Month. It was first proclaimed in 2010 in Manitoba, with other provinces following in its footsteps in the succeeding years. Even before the proclamation, since 1994, enVision's Eastman Employment Services (EES) has been at the forefront of inclusive employment assistance, supporting people with visible or hidden disabilities or other barriers to finding work. This service is available for people in Southeast Manitoba who are unemployed or underemployed and want to find jobs.

EES has had a significant impact on the community. Their participation in "Take Your MLA to Work Day", an initiative by Manitoba Supported Employment Network (MSEN), gives Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) a firsthand connection to people with a disability in the workplace.

William Middleton, an accomplished athlete and keen employee, recalls when Hon. Kelvin Goertzen visited his workplace at Canadian Tire, "It felt awesome to see Kelvin and show

him where I work. I took him around the store and showed him what I did. I'm glad EES has 'Take Your MLA to Work Day' every year. It teaches others to never judge a book by its cover."

According to Middleton, he considers himself lucky to have a job and expressed appreciation for enVision's part in developing his work life, "I'm thankful that I was given a chance. I learned things I didn't know I could do. Five years ago, I doubted myself if I could perform at work. Now when I wake up, I tell myself, yes. Yes, I can."

William's experience is just one of the many success stories our recent report has shown. We met 98% of our targets with the Employment Assistance Service program and 127% with the Supported Employment Program. Today, enVision's EES is one of Manitoba's most successful employment services providers.

Light It Up! For NDEAM

Imagine driving down Main Street and noticing that certain buildings are lit up blue and purple

for a day. This is not a coded message between establishments, but a Canada-wide movement led by the Ontario Disability Employment Network (ODEN) in partnership with the Canadian Association for Supported Employment (CASE) and MentorAbility called 'Light It Up! For NDEAM. This happens annually on every third Thursday of October. Started regionally in Ontario in 2020, this lighting event has grown into a national movement, sparking conversations about disability-inclusive employment.

In 2024, Light It Up! For NDEAM had a record-breaking participation of over eight hundred locations in almost two hundred communities across Canada. Famous landmarks such as Toronto's CN Tower, The Big Fiddle in Sydney, NS; the Terry Fox Memorial in St. John's; the Halifax Seaport District; Niagara Falls, and for the first time, the Olympic Stadium in Montreal (ODEN Press Release, 2024). Closer to home, in Winnipeg, the Provencher Bridge and the Winnipeg sign at The Forks were also lit in blue and purple, showing our collective pride and commitment to disability-inclusive employment.

By participating in NDEAM, enVision showed its ongoing commitment to promoting equality, inclusion, and opportunities for everyone and reassured our stakeholders of our unwavering dedication. Our services continue to help people living with an intellectual disability reach their goals, including finding meaningful jobs. By participating in NDEAM, enVision reaffirms its commitment to promoting equality, inclusion, and opportunities for everyone.



William ready to assist customers at Canadian Tire.

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