



**OPTIONS  
NORTHWEST**  
*live life your way*

# **Annual Report**

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## **2020-2021**

**OPTIONS NORTHWEST**  
**95 N. Cumberland Street**  
**Thunder Bay, ON P7A 4M1**  
**807-344-4994**  
**[optionsnorthwest.com](http://optionsnorthwest.com)**



# OPTIONS NORTHWEST

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*live life your way*

## Our Vision

Dedicated to respecting the right of people to live life their way.

## Our Mission

Through personalized OPTIONS, we collaborate with people and community partners to develop and offer creative personal and clinical services for individuals.

## Our Philosophy

OPTIONS recognizes people's diverse strengths and believes in the rights of all to:

-  Be respected
-  Be connected
-  Be informed and gain knowledge
-  Be self-reliant
-  Advocacy

OPTIONS NORTHWEST, its employees, students, volunteers, and the Board of Directors want to formally acknowledge that we are in the Robinson-Superior territory of 1850 and the land on which we live, work and support families and people with disabilities is the traditional territory of the Anishinaabek and Fort William First Nation.



# A Message from the Board of Directors & Executive Directors

**“The oak fought the wind and was broken, the willow bent when it must and survived.”**

— Robert Jordan

On behalf of the Board of Directors for OPTIONS NORTHWEST and the management team, we want to take this opportunity to present to you the Annual General Report for the 2020/2021 fiscal year. Our reflection at the end of the opening remarks from last year expressed the “humanness” of the work that we do. Pictures reflected from the previous year were of social gatherings, sharing of food, going out to participate in fun activities etc. and we wondered what this year’s report might look like given that we had just been thrown into a Pandemic called COVID-19. Well not surprisingly, this report is also reflective of social gatherings.....granted they are within locations and with masks, the sharing of food and still the ability to participate in fun activities. For us, we see how resilient this agency became despite a worldwide Pandemic and while restrictions, lock downs, PPE requirements and stay at home orders governed the entire year.....all of your creativity and absolute commitment to the work of the organization, showcases what we were able to achieve in 2020/2021. Thank you for your ability to “bend” like the willow tree and still help people to “Live Life their Way”.

While the year was not a traditional one for us, it amazes us how much was accomplished despite the challenges. We started the new fiscal year with heightened awareness of COVID-19. Our goal has been to educate ourselves on the virus from credible sources in order to protect OPTIONS employees and people supported. Through the Pandemic Team we provided ongoing messaging and support to ensure we were knowledgeable about efforts to mitigate risk.

And while it wasn’t the year to get out and do things, the work continued, and this report demonstrates what determination and spirit can achieve.

## Highlights of the year.

- While celebrations of Autism awareness in April couldn’t be done in our usual fashion, we did take time to remember the significance of the month as we support many with Autism.
- As an organization, we met virtually with many of our partner agencies, Ave. II, CLTB, March of Dimes, LCCC, Wesway, SGACL, and our children’s partner agencies to stay connected during a time when isolation was the norm. We learned from our partners and supported each other.
- Single employer status was imposed on us in April which significantly impacted our staffing pool. 29 employees were off due to COVID-19 imposed leaves. But even with this hurdle, we were still able to bring on 13 new casual employees and we were able to offer services to 65 people in group living, 1 person in Intensive Support, 8 people in Supported Independent living situations, 2 people in Home Share,.....2 people in CPS, 272 people in our clinical services. We were operational although in very different ways. And we managed to welcome Peenie to our Francis location.....despite there being a Pandemic.
- The Board of Directors also had to re-focus to a virtual platform and were able to do so for their meetings and for the AGM in 2020. Amazingly enough they were able to recruit a new Board member Tom Nesti to their team.
- As a way to acknowledge our employees for their dedication to their work and the risks of working front line during a Pandemic, we initiated some food deliveries to the homes. It was our way of saying thank you for continuing to be there for the people supported.
- We were grateful for the Government’s acknowledgement of direct support employees through their recognition programs of Pandemic pay and then Wage Enhancement pay. OPTIONS worked with our Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to deliver the benefits to those who qualified and to do so in a timely manner.



- Accessibility week was celebrated through a poster of people we support acknowledging that accessibility means more than just being able to physically access programs and services. True accessibility means being able to participate fully in our communities.
- June marked the Board's first virtual AGM and while the numbers were limited, it was the first time we engaged in a virtual meeting of this kind. We celebrated the successes of the previous year and were cautiously optimistic that the new year wouldn't be in total lock down.....something we never really fathomed at the start of the Pandemic.
- The summer months brought some much needed sunshine and some hope and optimism that things were improving.....at least in our community. The warmer weather allowed for some outside time and outdoor visits which were much needed. Employees both in our congregate settings and in our administrative offices were able to enjoy some vacation time.
- Throughout the entire year we still had to maintain regular operations of the agency; health and safety inspections, equipment reviews, maintaining compliance with QAM. Adjustments were made for training to participate online. Our primary focus was on the health and safety of the people we support and the employees; constantly changing directives, maintaining PPE supply, training on proper PPE usage, going from no masks to cloth masks to wearing surgical masks at all times and shields. The messaging was often fast, furious and ever changing to keep up with the recommendations of local Public and Provincial Public health and both our Ministry and the Ministry of Health.
- The Fall brought our postponed Health and Safety week celebrations to light in a virtual forum. Activities such as virtual bingo were planned to acknowledge the great work of our Health and Safety committee.
- Management/Finance administration had to implement a new budget format, participate in training to learn it and report on a new platform called TPON for the successful submission of our budget to our funder MCCSS.
- OPTIONS had hoped to bring in-person training to the organization through presenter Claudia Ferryman. While COVID-19 restrictions prevented the in-person gatherings, the restrictions challenged us to find other ways to offer this training virtually. 177 employees participated in ***"Enhancing Individual and Team Effectiveness"***. The feedback on the training was very positive.
- OPTIONS successfully transitioned to a new Benefit provider Community Services Benefits Trust in the Fall and offered a new EAP Lifeworks program to all employees in April of 2020.
- OPTIONS and UNIFOR successfully bargained a new Collective Agreement for the unionized employees. All sessions were completely virtual for the first time.
- December brought to light how much we missed our in-person art workshops that had us painting rocks and making ornaments in the past. But deliveries of craft items were made to all locations to ensure the tradition continued just in more intimate ways. The Italian Hall luncheon was missed by many especially families who joined us for this event. But full turkey dinners with delicious pies were delivered by the management team to bring some Christmas spirit to all. Rumour has it that even Santa and his Elf made an appearance.



- It was a sad year for us in the passing of 3 people we supported. May their memories help us to remember how blessed we were to have them as a part of the OPTIONS family.
- The Fall also brought out the announcement of the planned retirement of Executive Director Anna-Marie Eckensweiler and recruitment got underway for a new Executive Director. The Board was pleased to announce in March that Tony DeAgazio was the successful applicant for the position and welcomed him in March to transition with Anna-Marie to the new role.
- A lot of work went on in the background this past year to plan for and bring on new transitional aged youth (TAY's). The hope was for 4 new youth to transition from the children's system but with some challenges out of our control, the planning will continue, and we will welcome these new youth early into the next fiscal year. These new youth mean growth for our agency and more jobs for our employees.
- Despite the many challenges, our offices remained open for administrative employees, our Clinical team of CRT and management to work out of to keep the agency responsive to providing services. We know that people supported miss popping by to say hello and have a cup of coffee, but work is continuing to make 95 North Cumberland a hub where people can come to gather when it is safe to do so.
- Exciting developments finally began on the development of a Snoezelen room for OPTIONS. Several years back Rheel Dumias' family donated funds to the agency to develop a Snoezelen room for the benefit of people supported. We are grateful for such a donation and for the opportunity to develop this space for sensory activities. The work began this fiscal year at 95 North Cumberland to do the construction and purchase the equipment. More news to come on this exciting project in the next fiscal year.
- One of the hardest things during this Pandemic has been hearing from families and loved ones on how hard this has been on them and the people we support. Basic human nature requires contact with those we care about. Hugging/embracing loved ones has been on hold way too long during this time but those hard calls to restrict visits made by the Ministry and ourselves, were done in the best interests of all. We applaud everyone for their patience during this time; it was not easy for anyone.
- One of the greatest achievements that we can be proud of was the advocacy we did for testing, PPE, vaccines etc. For us success was realized when we kept COVID-19 out of locations and when we got the codes for the vaccines. To have our front-line employees receive vaccines was truly a huge feeling of accomplishment for us. Our advocacy didn't stop there as March 26<sup>th</sup> marked the date that people we supported could be vaccinated. Just to be able to see the people at the clinic and the employees in such a gathering.....brought tears to many eyes. Truly the light was being felt from a very long tunnel that seemed dark for so long.



- To end our year, we officially transferred the property of our Skyline location over to CLTB. They had some special requirements for use of the home, and it was no longer functional for our purposes. It served us well over the years and hopefully it will be home for others through our partner agency.



Success is realized when everyone works together, and this past fiscal year was a testament of how the agency from all areas came together to address the challenges of COVID-19.



- To all the amazing **people and families we are privileged to support**.....especially this year. We appreciate your support of our efforts to keep everyone safe.
- To all of our **awesome employees**. Your commitment to your role every day is appreciated but especially during this year of COVID-19.
- To our **union partners of UNIFOR and ONA** for continuing to work in partnership with us for the best interests of the employees and people supported.
- To our **partner agencies** both in the adult and children's services...your connections with us this year helped keep us strong during challenging times.
- To our partner the **Thunder Bay District Health Unit** for your overwhelming support of our organization while trying to support our whole community.
- To our Provincial partners, OASIS, OADD, GLS, CLO, Provincial Network for your constant sharing of information to guide us.
- To our funder the **Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services** for your financial support and help with keeping us stocked with PPE as this was so important to the work that we do.
- To our **Board of Directors** for your continued gift of time and ongoing commitment to this organization.
- To a committed **management team** of supervisors, managers and directors.



Meghan Hanbury  
Board of Directors President

Anna-Marie Eckensweiler  
Executive Director (Retired)

Tony DeAgazio  
Executive Director



## Board of Directors



Meghan Hanbury  
President



Karen Kemp  
Vice President



Anna Gosselin  
Treasurer



Sheila Waywanko  
Secretary



Leigh Abthorpe  
Director



Patricia Maxton  
Director



Tom Nesti  
Director

## Directors



Anna-Marie Eckensweiler  
Executive Director



Tony DeAgazio  
Executive Director  
(Started March 16, 2021)



Jill Thompson  
Director of  
Human Resources

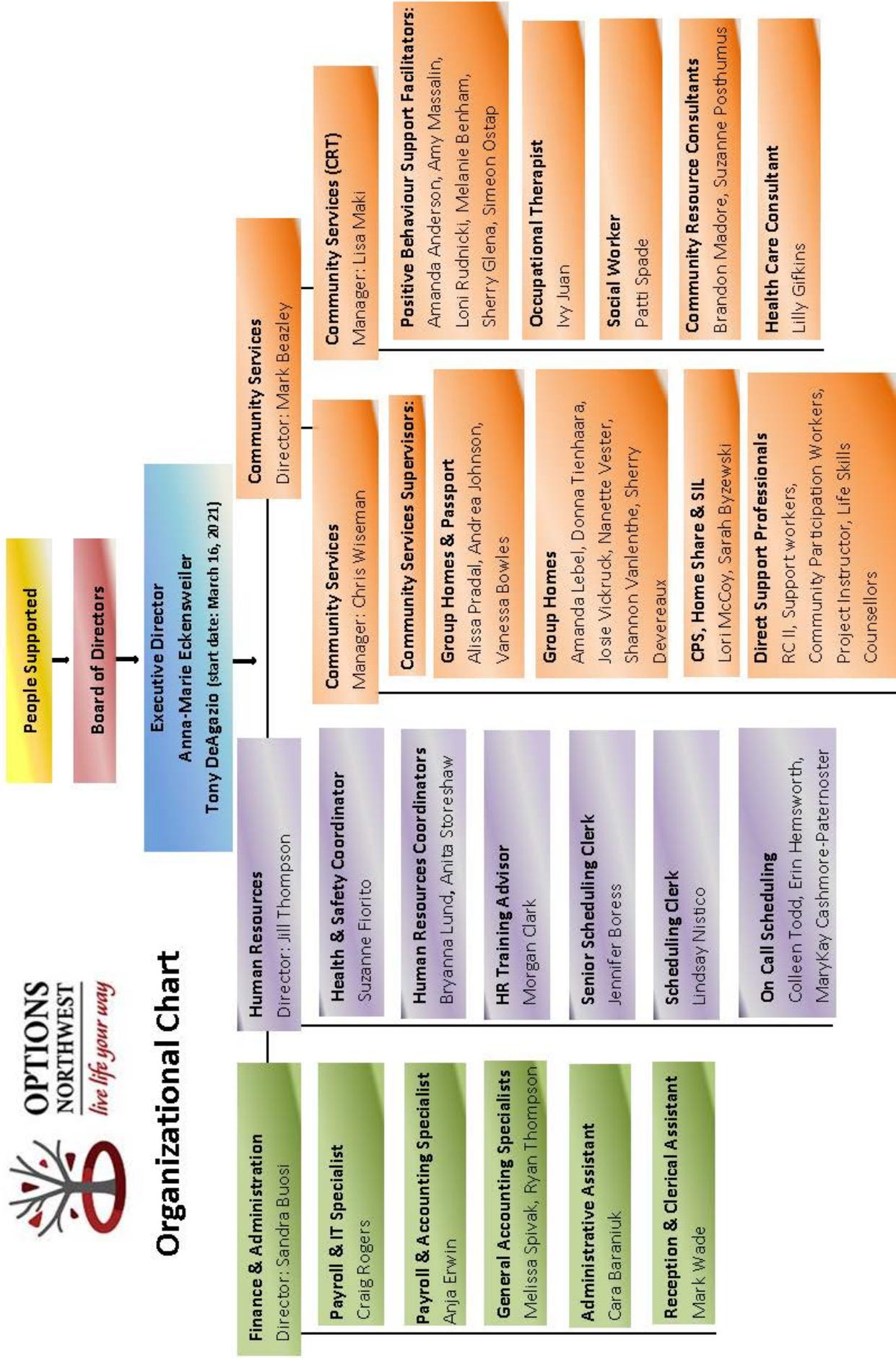


Mark Beazley  
Director of  
Community Services





# Organizational Chart



# Goodbye, Anna-Marie, Misza, and Bow



Fly, Eagles Fly Jersey Day 2019



Our Executive Dog, Misza decided to retire from ONW along with Mom.



Happy Halloween 2019!



Bow, our Jr. Executive Dog choose to take an early retirement with his family



Taking pointers from Olaf!?



2019 Directors



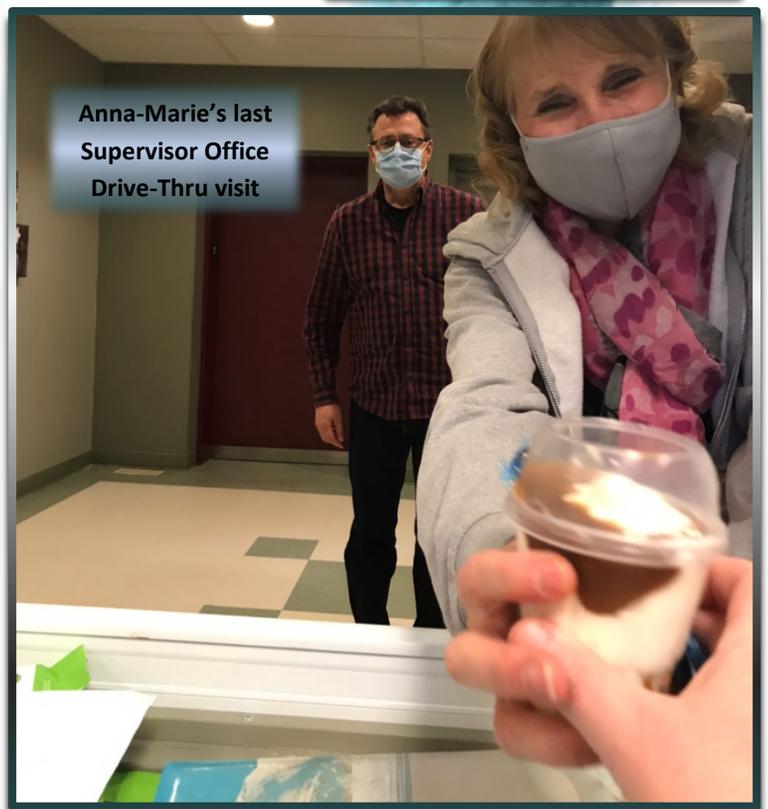
Anna-Marie & Shawna Canada Day 2019



2019 Christmas luncheon

*"Goodbyes always make my Throat hurt"*

*- Charlie Brown*



Anna-Marie's last Supervisor Office Drive-Thru visit



The ladies from Market St. sending best retirement wishes!



# Employee Recognition

## Recognitions April 2020-March 2021

Curtis Armstrong

Nahid Anee

Veronique Frost

Amanda Radl

Patti Dustin

Jaime Carpenter

Monica Van Ramshorst

Jerry-Lynn Durant

Rachelle Brown

Monica Pawson

Juanitta Elliott

Julie Lemmetty

Karen Seguin

Marie Gusola

Twyla Oleksuk

Barbara McQueen

Melissa Spivak

Warren Vickruck

Kathleen Atkins

Nicole Butvin

Rob Francis

MaryKay Cashmore-Paternoster

Alissa Pradal

Kim Mcbain

Michelle Tallon

Vanessa Bowles

Janet Berube

Shelly Kozyra

Suzanne Posthumus

Ryan Thompson

Shirley Ann Boudreau

Ashlyn Deruiter

Lori Sonego

Jodi Kylander



## Retirements April 2020-March 2021

Terry-Lynne Chesterman

Shelley Mclean

Marites Fredrickson

Gayle Schutte

Congratulations to all employees who celebrated a milestone year of service with OPTIONS NORTHWEST.  
Thank you for everything you do!



# Thank You

OPTIONS NORTHWEST would like to Thank...

...People receiving services and their families.

...Employees, students, volunteers, and community partners.

...The Board of Directors.

...Cara Baraniuk for her creativity with this report.

...Everyone who submitted photos and stories for this report.

...Everyone who participated in OPTIONS events throughout the year.

It is our privilege to support and partner with all of you!



# *In Memory*

*“A special smile, a special face,  
in our hearts, a special place,  
memories are a gift to treasure,  
ours of you, will last forever.”*

*- Anonymous*



*Larry Ward*



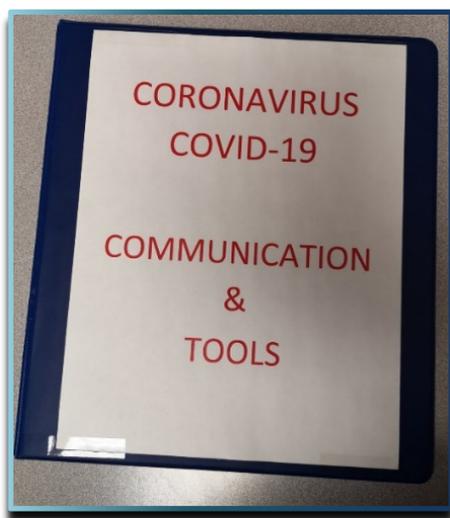
*Grant Dawd*



*Suzie Lacroix*

# The Pandemic Team

The day was March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020. We all remember it quite clearly as it was the day that the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a Pandemic. It was the day that the course of our actions changed, and the Pandemic Team (Anna-Marie, Mark, Jill, April, Chris, Lisa, Suzanne and Lilly) officially started to meet daily to focus our discussions on COVID-19 and the impacts it could have on the people we support, the employees who work for the agency, the agency itself as well as the world at large. Over the first few weeks information was rapid in coming out and it was ever changing. We went from no masks being needed, to masks being needed right away. It felt as though every time we met and made a decision, something changed, and we needed to adjust our messaging and approach. Our focus from the outset has been ensuring we maintain the quality of service that the people we support, and their loved ones have come to expect from us, while balancing the extreme measures we needed to take in order to keep everyone safe and healthy. The committee has spent many days and hours talking about Personal Protective Equipment, training, communication measures, the list goes on. The team met daily during the first 6 months of the Pandemic, and then began to meet three times per week. The committee felt it was important to ensure we were providing clear communication to the people we support, the agency, and the employees, and so began the era of the "COVID-19 Binder". All of the information we have shared goes to every group home, support situation and families so that everyone is kept up to date and apprised of any of the latest information they need to be made aware of.



“No matter how much falls on us, we keep plowing ahead. That’s the only way to keep the roads clear.”

– Greg Kincaid



# COVID-19 Vaccination Clinic



In March of 2021, the team welcomed Tony in his role as the new Executive Director. Soon after Tony joined us, the team successfully planned, prepared, and pulled off (in under 48 hours) a vaccination clinic for those people we support. Everyone pulled together and arranged a venue, transportation, equipment needed, schedule etc. in under 2 days. We were able to, with the help of Superior North EMS and the Thunder Bay District Health Unit to vaccinate 102 people on March 26<sup>th</sup>. The joy and sense of accomplishment we felt that day was immense. It was wonderful to be able to see all of the folks again and show them our smiles (under our masks of course!). We have hopes that one day soon we will be able to return to some sense of normalcy. Until then, we keep our distance, wear our masks, wash our hands and stay negative (for results 😊) but positive in our thinking! Stay safe everyone!

Submitted By: Jill Thompson





# Community Services





# *Pinkies up at Rosslyn!*



Rosslyn planned a high tea party to celebrate Victoria Day weekend and Brien's birthday!

It is also part of Brien's goals to experience different cultures.

We made a replica of the British flag, crowns for the gentleman and "fascinators" for the ladies. The menu included finger sandwiches including cucumber and the rolled kind, scones, special chocolate dipped rice crispy bars, apple squares and chocolate birthday cake. The table was set elegantly with real cups, saucers and a tablecloth. Everyone dressed in their finest including pearl strands for the ladies and bowties for the gentleman. Classical music played in the background! It was great fun and although not all employees could attend everyone had some part in preparing for it!



Submitted by Monica Van Ramshorst





The Guys at Nicholetts Baking the World a Better Place One Apple Pie at a Time in Memory of Their Friend, Larry!



Liz

Life is  
What You  
Bake It



Gordie



Elton



Maryanne



Tannia



One of the projects that we decided to do during staying at home during the Pandemic was creating a table. Billie and employees worked on making a glass mosaic table that would be donated to OPTIONS for the annual draw at Christmas. Billie was the one who worked on the table with employees. She helped pick the colours and employees added motivational words that were fired on the glass. The glass was glued onto the table and Billie enjoyed this process. Employees grouted the table as that's a messy process. We had a great time doing this project.

Submitted By: Leigh Neilson



Congratulations to Monica Van Ramshorst for Winning the Mosaic Glass Table!



"The World is but a Canvas to the Imagination."

- Kerry David Thoreau



# Nicholett's Minion Garden



When I look back over last summer my strongest memory is watching Larry paint the Minion Characters for the Minion Garden at Nicholetts Road home. Larry was very excited to be working outside in the spring sunshine. Larry was laughing and singing bits of Elvis tunes, "put on my blue suede shoes" and "These Boots are Made for Walking" and paying close attention to painting the Minions for the garden just right. There was a warm breeze, the sun was shining, and Charlie, Larry's long-time friend was sitting beside him laughing and joking and talking about the good ol' days while they worked. David and Ryley worked together as a team cleaning the tires, painting, and finally filling them with soil. There were big smiles on their faces, and I could see the sense of accomplishment they felt. Ananias, always willing to help when needed, pitched in by carrying many pails of water and playing his radio for entertainment. Donna really appeared to enjoy painting the decorative signs. She also enjoyed the apple pie we had for a celebration one evening after working hard in the garden. Joe always had a huge smile on his face that was contagious and was super enthusiastic taking the lead planting vegetables and pulling weeds. Joe discovered he had quite the green thumb. For myself I enjoyed the time spent together working towards a common goal. Every day was really enjoyable and strengthened the friendships between the guys who live at Nicholetts road.

There was a healthy harvest of onions, carrots, tomatoes, cucumbers, and lettuce. The Minion Garden turned out excellent and is a really fun contribution to the home. Terrific work everyone!!

Tragically, after the Minion Garden was completed, Larry passed away and this was a huge loss to the home and was very difficult for everybody at Nicholetts Road. Larry is missed deeply and everyone at the house wanted to do something to remember Larry and help us work through this time. The suggestion was made to plant apple trees and Charlie quickly agreed this would be a great idea because his friend Larry loved apple pies and often talked about them. This quickly grew into building a Memorial Garden on the hill beside the home. Charlie, Ananias, and Donna contributed by painting

decorative windowpanes with the names of the people who live at the home and one for Larry as well. The trees were planted, soil was turned, decorative rock spread on the path to the garden and Perennial Plants with bright yellow flowers were planted. Ryley, Joe and David really shined here and planted all the flowers that Charlie, Ananias, and Donna picked out. Finally, a bench with a plaque was dedicated to Larry "Cowboy" W. It was placed in the centre of the garden so Larry's friends could sit, enjoy the sun, the flowers and remember their friend who will always have a special place in our hearts at Nicholetts Road. Happy trails Larry.

Submitted By: Chuck Lindsey





Never  
Ending  
Garden





The Frederica Street crew decided to celebrate Valentine's Day by swapping out heart shaped goodies for burgers and fries!



This past St. Patrick's Day a little Leprechaun evaded a trap that the ladies at Market St. set for him, but he did leave them some sweet treats to share.



People supported and employees from Tuscany decorated the windows with beautiful art and messages as a fun creative activity.





Elton and David had a great time trying their luck while playing BINGO at home.



Tammy created fabulous art on the windows for people to admire from inside and outside of her home.



The team at Glenmary got very creative during the pandemic by putting together fun safe activities such as hallway bowling!





The Rosslyn crew enjoyed a Cinco de Mayo party. We were looking for activities that we could enjoy at home and seeing that one of Brien's goals was to experience/ explore different cultures, we thought it would be fun for all to participate. We planned decorations, a menu, and games.

Sadie, Terry, and Laurie made pinatas with balloons which we filled with something for everyone (individually wrapped items!)

Everyone enjoyed watching and taking part in whacking at it. It was a lot of fun for all of us! We played Mexican train and had taco salad and bean salad for supper. Sadie made a guacamole dip for tortilla and Churro chips from soft tortillas for dessert. Of course, we had to dress up and made a Mexican flag too. Brien learned a lot from the experience.

Submitted By: Monica Van Ramshorst



# Good Times at Market



"Having a dance party at Tannia's birthday party was my favourite ".  
- Jenna



"I am happy Maryanne is my new roommate, she is like family". - Tannia

This year has been challenging for everyone. The employees at Market Street have gone above and beyond to ensure that the ladies continued to live their best lives. Always ensuring safety measures were being followed.

This year the ladies developed many new undiscovered talents and skills while under lockdown orders. We are so proud of them for overcoming the barriers that they have faced. Great job ladies!

Submitted By: Shannon Circelli



"This is Olaf. Me, Tannia and Shannon made him. Then we had a snowball fight listening to loud music. It was a fun day"! -Liz

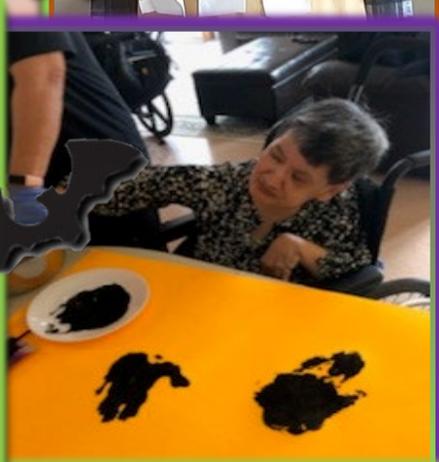


"I love it there in my new home"  
- Maryanne





# happy halloween



# Fall Time Fun at Glengary!

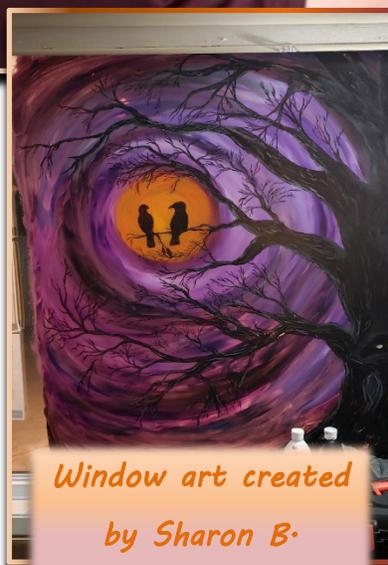
“Dear Great Pumpkin, I am looking forward to your arrival on Halloween Night. I Hope you will Bring me lots of Presents...



...Everyone Tells me you are Fake, but I Believe in you.  
P.S. If you Really are Fake, don't Tell me. I don't want to know.”  
– Linus Van Pelt

October 2020 was a fun month for the people supported at Glengary Drive. We were several months into the COVID-19 Pandemic and extra seasonal fun was welcomed by all! Halloween Bingo, decorating Halloween mason jar lanterns, having a crazy hat dinner wearing Halloween props and watching “It’s the Great Pumpkin Charlie Brown” were all activities that were enjoyed by everyone. People supported watched various pumpkin carving videos on iPads and had a great time decorating many pumpkins of their own. A couple pumpkin spice lattes were enjoyed, and a highlight was the creative painting project on the big window by the entrance. People supported enjoyed watching it be completed. Employees played Halloween music and had a lot of fun with the project. Individuals painted parts of bottom corners, agreed with colour choices, lounged nearby and seemed excited with the painting in their entrance. Festive fun was enjoyed by all!

Submitted By Sharon Belanger





David soaking in the view at Fisherman's Wharf Park.



Tony having a great day at the Terry Fox Monument.



Liz and Tannia having some winter fun while sledding.



Ed soaking up the sun while admiring the neighbourhood.



Lillian and Ron gazing at the Snowbirds on a beautiful summer day.



Darlene, Gordie and Eva exploring the trails at The Cascades.



Ruth enjoying the crisp spring air and beautiful scenery at Marina Park.



## Chef Dawn

One of Dawn's goals this year was learning how to bake. Dawn took part in and learned how to make a blueberry cheesecake! Dawn found the process messy but easy! She said it turned out very tasty. Her roommates said they enjoyed it too! Dawn has plans to bake more in the future.

Submitted By: Dacre St. Employees



## Welcome to OPTIONS, Peenie!

In early March Peenie B. was welcomed by all at the Francis Group Home. Prior to coming to the Francis St. home, Peenie had input in the decor of his room. He chose a lovely shade of green for his walls. Peenie loves his new room. Peenie is a very interesting man! We discovered that he can communicate with us all by writing in both English and Cree! He had never done this where he last lived. Peenie loves Westerns and especially the news and he will often let us all know the latest update on COVID-19. While there are always challenges to adjust to a new home, Loni from CRT is helping with the transition. With the nice weather just around the corner all at Francis are hoping to spend more time with Peenie outdoors.

Submitted By: Josie Vickruck



## Kenwood Kitchen Renovation



# Slices and Smiles!



At OPTIONS NORTHWEST we know the basic algebraic equation that  $\text{Pizza pie} + \text{parties} = \text{smiles!}$

Over the past year people supported have not been able to go out to eat pizza so the obvious fix to this problem was to bring the pizza to them!





Happy 65<sup>th</sup> Stan!



Tannia's 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday was full of fun, music, goodies, and a dance party with her roommates!



Well look who turned 76! Charlie had a fun filled birthday celebration with pizza for his birthday lunch. He enjoyed his favourite Hawaiian Pizza and ice cream cake with his roommates. Charlie sported his new fishing hat, sunglasses, and his favorite treats.

Submitted By: Donna Tienhaara



David celebrated his birthday a little differently in 2020. Hodder employees helped him make a sign for those driving by to give him a celebratory birthday honk!



## ROSSLYN'S COVID-19 CAPERS 2020

The lockdowns and COVID-19 protocols in 2020, challenged the Rosslyn employees to be creative in providing fun and educational experiences for our individuals. We began to celebrate some of the special days on the calendar by exploring the cultures associated with them.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of May we celebrated Cinco de Mayo by preparing the week before in making piñatas from paper mache covered balloons, decorating and filling them with special treats. The resulting giggles and antics during the attempts to smash them were quite entertaining! The meal for this event included taco salad, homemade guacamole and tortilla chips and Spanish music. The individuals wore costumes of sombreros, Mexican blankets and paper mustaches.

Victoria Day was celebrated as a "High Tea" theme for one individual's birthday party. Preparations included making a British flag, "fascinators" for the ladies to wear, crowns for the gentleman, finger sandwiches, scones, cakes and "dainties" served on fine china and tea service. Everyone wore their very best including pearl necklaces for the ladies and bowties for the gentleman. Everyone felt special that day!

Canada Day was celebrated with a steak BBQ with all the trimmings and décor. Everyone dressed in red and white, enjoyed some time outdoors and had strawberry shortcake for dessert. After dark, some even got to see fireworks at the neighbours next door!

In August, we decided to explore the Hawaiian culture. The week ahead was spent making grass skirts, collecting leis and menu planning. The menu included coconut rice, Hawaiian meatballs, Hawaiian coleslaw and fruit salad served in a pineapple shell as well as Pineapple Delight cake for dessert. Activities included sawing open a real coconut and attempting to do a hula dance!

Several individuals met goals through these activities and as an offshoot of these experiences one individual developed a cookbook including the recipes and pictures of the dishes that were prepared. Everyone received pictures of the events for their photo albums so that we could reminisce about our COVID-19 capers!

Submitted by Monica Van Ramshorst



## Community Connections

Well, this past year has been different to say the least. With COVID-19 everywhere we had to find a new way to do everything.

We usually have drop ins for people supported by OPTIONS and community members. This year we did not want anyone to miss out on celebrating special events, so we decided to bring the events to the individuals.

One of the events was Canada Day. We delivered hot dogs, buns and cupcakes to each location including the SIL/CPW and Home Share programs along with several Canadian accessories. Some of which included sunglasses, hats, hair ties, tattoos, bandanas, and decorations for the homes. We also included arts and crafts. The people supported and employees really had an awesome time.

Another big event was Halloween. Once again, we delivered Halloween treats and decorations. Everyone decorated their homes and had a party. The costumes were awesome. We also held a creativity contest, and the pictures were on display at 95. This was a huge success.

The biggest event of the past year was Christmas. We always have a big celebration at the Italian Hall. This is the time of year where families and friends come together to celebrate the past year with OPTIONS NORTHWEST.

We still wanted to make this special for everyone, so we came up with a plan. We put together crafting kits for every person within the organization and individuals that are supported by CRT. The kit included everything that was needed to make Snowy Mason Jars that lit up.

They turned out beautiful. Some individuals even made one for their family members.

Others were used to decorate the homes for the holidays.

I would say that even with all the challenges that we faced over the past year, we were able to ensure that everyone could celebrate together.

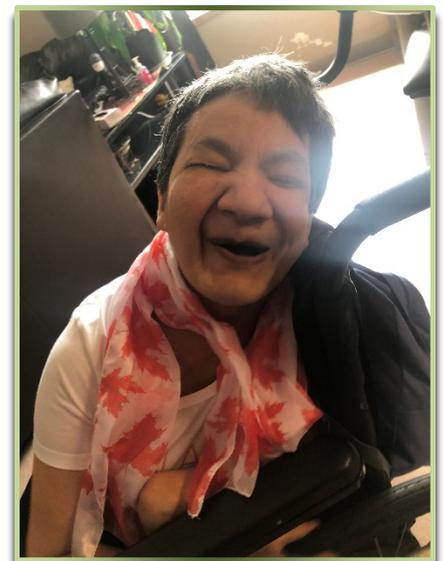
Submitted by: Lori McCoy



Christmas mason jars from Glengary.



Billie posing with her Frankenpumpkin on Halloween.

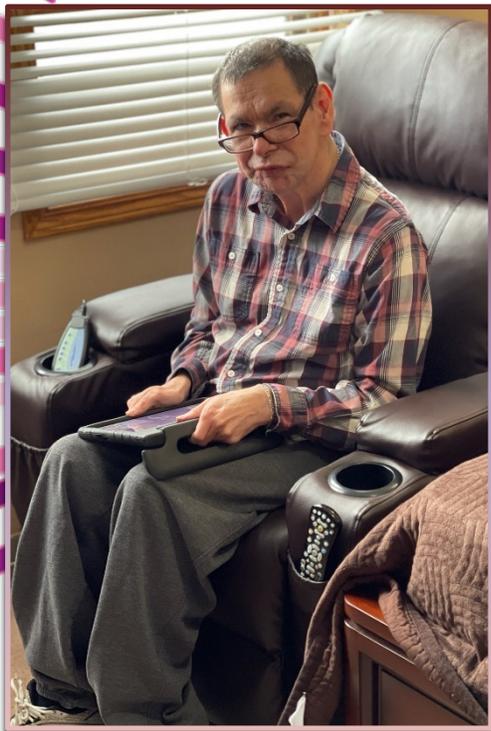


Geraldine happily sporting her Canada Day scarf.



# Passport

This year Passport has extended their spending parameters to include items that would not normally be covered to be covered.



Dan recently received a Samsung Tablet that he uses daily. He has been using this device to Facetime an old roommate of his.



Here is Ananias using his new iPad. Ananias has a keen ear and love for music, especially classic rock. Ananias has become quite proficient at using his iPad to search for music videos he likes on YouTube. He also likes to use his iPad to stay in touch and watch Pow Wows and festivals. Ananias can often be seen sitting on the deck enjoying some sun and relaxing with his tunes.



Jane, Sandra and Dan taking part in at home Passport activities. They painted beautiful pottery from DIY Studio.



# Supported Independent Living

Damian and Kyler are both very outgoing and lively individuals. Despite the confines that COVID-19 Pandemic gave us all, they both remained positive throughout these tough months.

During this past year, they were unable to participate in many regular community events with SIL employees, as well as any events indoors. Instead, to ensure COVID-19 Safety Protocols and Social Distancing, Damian and Kyler opted to enjoy outdoor activities with SIL employees (RAIN, SHINE...or SNOW!) These activities included Nature Walks, Football, Frisbee, and Skating!

They also enjoyed multiple Online Interactive activities with SIL employees and others supported in the SIL Program. This included Online Video Games, Group Cooking Activities, and Facetime Hangouts/Music.

Although it is still very important for all to continue focusing on COVID-19 Protocols and Safety Precautions, let's remember to enjoy and reflect on some of the joyful and creative moments that the SIL Program has enjoyed this past year.

Submitted By: Riley Cassidy



Damian



Alexis and Kyler



Shawna loves music. She has collected over 100 CD's. The newest adventure she is beginning is to learn how to become a DJ. She has bought most of the equipment needed. She is reading and looking online daily for tutorials to help her understand how to run it all. Steve from Backstage Music has been a big help teaching us about what is needed. One day soon you will see her DJ'ing events!

Submitted By: Lori McCoy & SIL employees

## Welcome Terrence!

A new individual in service within our CPW program is Terrence B. Terrence loves to play video games and spend time with his family at home. Welcome to the OPTIONS NORTHWEST Family Terrence!





This is Shari, she works with employees through a purchase service agreement. She has created these beautiful beadworks 😊



Tyrese is a young man in our SIL program. He has been with OPTIONS NORTHWEST for almost 4 years. Tyrese is truly living his life his way. He has his own apartment and worked at a local grocery store all while working toward completing high school.

After Tyrese graduated from high school, he decided to continue his education at Confederation College. He just completed the first year with the CICE program and he is ready to enjoy his summer break. He will return to Confederation College in the fall but is unsure of which program he will take. We wish Tyrese all the success in the world we know that he will do great things!



Submitted By: Lori McCoy & Tyrese



These are some pictures from our Wednesday cooking group. We meet via messenger and cook something that an individual in the SIL program chooses.

These pictures are of poutine and Redneck casserole making. You will see that one person added dye to his gravy. He said it was great! Our plan is to create a cookbook with all of their recipes. This group is super fun and usually has a great turnout.

Submitted By: Lori McCoy



Brendan loves to build amazing structures and other creations using his Lego sets.



## *Spirit of Christmas 2020*

In the spirit of giving, the Cumberland offices continued this past year with the tradition of raising funds for the Spirit of Christmas endeavor through personal contributions. For those new to our organization, we started this endeavor over 10 years ago. We know that some of the people we support don't always qualify for Christmas hampers etc. in our community and could use a little extra "spirit" at this time of year.

In the past, the Cumberland employees would do little luncheons or other creative fundraisers to raise some of the money needed for the treats at Christmas. With busy schedules and then this last year with the COVID-19 challenges, the employees from 95 and 86 Cumberland are now doing a contribution to this endeavour.

15 individuals were nominated this past year and all 15 were the lucky recipients of this endeavor. A nomination form is circulated in October/November to the agency looking for input as to individuals who may need something "extra" at Christmas.

The "Spirit of Christmas" always looks a little different for each person as the items are "individualized". Some are recipients of groceries and toiletries while others enjoy make up, bubble bath, art supplies, gift cards, journals, music, books, and the list goes on. When individuals are nominated, we ask those nominating to give us some ideas as to what the person could use or may need. And then the shopping begins.....and this past year with COVID-19, there sure were some challenges to get items on people's lists. But this challenge only encouraged us to find sales to make sure needed items were a part of the gifts.



In October of each year, I pull a small committee together from the Cumberland employees to help out with the review of the nominations, to do all of the shopping and most importantly, to do all of the wrapping of the many beautiful packages. This year's committee was made up of Bryanna Lund, Amanda Anderson, Lisa Maki, Loni Rudnicki, Sarah Byzewski, Jenn Boress, Cara Baraniuk, Jill Thompson and myself. One would think we have a huge budget with all of the things we buy, but we rely on the donations so this past year we set a limit of \$75.00 per person to put together all of the items. I also did something that I hadn't done in the past..... I requested a donation from the Board of Director's donation fund. Back in 2017, my mom passed away and many people showed their condolences by donating to OPTIONS in her memory. My mom (Helen Gural) loved Christmas and volunteered her time every year to the city's Christmas cheer campaign. With COVID-19 impacting so many this past year, I wanted to give a little extra cheer to those who were nominated to the "Spirit of Christmas". I asked the Board for a small donation to augment our efforts and all 15 individuals were able to get an additional \$50.00 of gift cards etc. to brighten their Christmas. My mom would have been pleased that people received some extra cheer during such a tough time in our history of experiencing a worldwide pandemic.





As in years past, Laura Salini showed her generous spirit by knitting and donating her beautiful scarves. These are always a nice addition to this project, and we are grateful for her ongoing support. We have been blessed by Laura's generosity for many years and fortunate that OPTIONS continues to be on her list for donations.

Carolyn Grgurich in her retirement also keeps the "Spirit of Christmas" close to her heart. Her donation of homemade baking for each recipient gives the gifts that personal touch. We try hard not to eat these before delivery.....but they are sure tempting. We are grateful to both Laura and Carolyn for their continued generosity towards our cause.

With COVID-19 restrictions, shopping was done on everyone's own time as was the wrapping. We missed getting together to share in our stories of great bargain hunting and the excitement of what came together in the end..... but all was not lost. While the committee faced COVID-19 challenges, they were a determined group, and everyone came together to ensure all was completed as if nothing had changed.....this is called resilience.

The committee extends its thanks to the Cumberland employees for their generous support financially of the "Spirit of Christmas" throughout the whole year and especially for all of the extras donated at Christmas time.

On behalf of the 2020 Spirit of Christmas Committee

Anna-Marie Eckensweiler



## *Christmas Dinner Deliveries*

As the Christmas Season approached and restrictions remained on gathering sizes, the unfortunate decision was made to cancel the agency's Annual Christmas Luncheon. It was at this time that the management team got creative and worked with the Valhalla to organize a full Turkey Dinner that the management team would deliver to each home, supported independent living situation, and other support situations. On December 22 and December 23, the management team headed out in an awful snowstorm (one driveway had 3 feet of snow in it still!) to bring the meals along with some Christmas Cheer to all of the locations/support arrangements. Full Turkey Dinners were prepared including a whole turkey, potatoes, vegetables, salad, buns, drinks and two pies for dessert! The Valhalla was even able to provide us with individually packaged meals (including dessert) for the supported independent living folks! The vans smelled heavenly as we set out to bring this food to everyone. Santa and his Elf were not too far behind the food deliveries, as they visited every home as well with Timbits in tow! To see the smiles on all of the people we support, and the employees was exactly what each of us needed during a time of such joy and hope, when we all felt as though COVID-19 had taken so much from us all... we were reminded of why we do what we do each and every day. And while we could not do the traditional Italian hall luncheon, creativity helped do "meals on wheels" for our Christmas event. Submitted By: Jill Thompson



With Pandemic restrictions in full swing the annual Cumberland Christmas Breakfast was not possible so a virtual luncheon was held in its place. Cumberland employees at both 95 and 86 decorated their doors and wore festive masks. The Community Service Supervisors won the door decorating competition. Lori and Sarah didn't let the Pandemic stomp on their unique yearly Christmas getups!



# Holiday Mason Jars





Donna decorating gingerbread cookies.



Jenna posing with Santa.



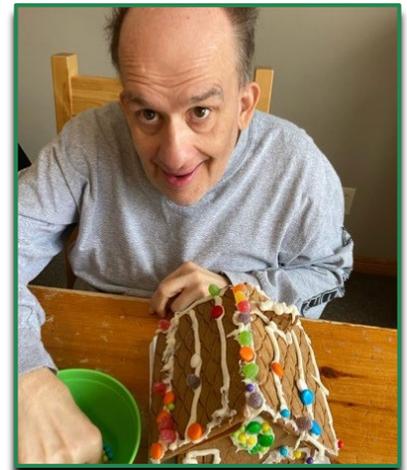
Maryanne making Christmas treats.



Tannia checking out her stocking on Christmas morning.



Ryley sprucing up some holiday goodies.



Elton's sugary gingerbread house.



COVID-19 has challenged us all to think outside of the box, and to try and make connections in different ways. This is Matt celebrating with his mom in a different way than they are used to.





# Human Resources

Well, to say that 2020-2021 has been a year full of new challenges and new experiences could be an understatement. We have spent the majority of the last year navigating this new climate we call COVID-19. The majority of our focus has been on ensuring we have enough of the best people to take care of the individuals that we support, all the while ensuring that we are adhering to the directives set out for us by our government. This has posed some challenges, as we were faced over the last year with not having employees who can work at multiple agencies in the city. Our staffing compliment was reduced greatly by this factor, and we have spent some time figuring out how to be creative with our hiring practices, and keep our employees working with us! During the past year we lost our Human Resources and Training Advisor (Brittany) and we were able to hire Morgan to replace her in the role. Morgan has kept herself busy with learning and managing all of the agency training requirements. Jenn and Lindsay (Scheduling) have continued to manage our scheduling needs while working from home the majority of the last year. Collen and Erin have done a wonderful job handling all of the after hours and weekend calls for scheduling. They have adapted to the reduced number of employees we have. MaryKay has remained on with us but has been unable to work due to the Pandemic. Bryanna has busied herself with managing all of the job postings, recruitment efforts, managing the benefits and new benefit provider, the list goes on. Her counterpart Anita has spent some time this year at home during these challenging times, helping her kids with online learning. We miss seeing Anita in the office and hope that things will settle, and we will resume some normalcy! Suzanne has kept herself very busy being a member of the Pandemic Team, and focusing all of her extra time on helping the agency to manage COVID-19. She is instrumental in ensuring that we are compliant and up to date with regards to PPE, training and any other health and safety measures that are required of the agency. Her diligence and hard work has been very much appreciated over this last year. We unfortunately were not able to participate in any Career Fairs this year, as everything is mostly virtual. Our hopes are that by the winter months of next year we will be able to once again have in person career fairs be a thing we start to do again. While it has certainly been a challenging year, we continue to shine in the face of adversity. We continue to work together to provide the level of exemplary service that the people supported, employees and union partners have come to expect of us. For all of the additional work people have taken on this year, for all of the additional safety measures they have endured and adapted to with smiles on their faces, for keeping themselves and in turn those people we support safe, I am forever grateful. At some point in the future, we will look back on these years, and we will remember all the things we learned, we will remember that we did more with less, and that in the face of great adversity – we succeeded, and we thrived and survived.

Submitted By: Jill Thompson, Director Human Resources





Suzanne Fiorito  
Health & Safety  
Coordinator



Anita Storeshaw  
Human Resources  
Coordinator



Bryanna Lund  
Human Resources  
Coordinator



Morgan Clark  
Human Resources  
& Training Advisor



Jen Boress  
Senior Scheduling Clerk



Lindsay Nistico  
Scheduling Clerk



Colleen Todd  
On Call Scheduling Clerk



Erin Hemsworth  
On Call Scheduling Clerk



MaryKay Cashmore-Patternoster  
On Call Scheduling Clerk



## Finance & Administration



Anja Irwin  
Payroll & Accounting  
Specialist



Melissa Spivak  
General Accounting  
Specialist



Cara Baraniuk  
Administrative Assistant



Mark Wade  
Reception/Clerical Support

Not Pictured:

Craig Rogers, Payroll & IT Specialist

Ryan Thompson, General Accounting Specialist



## Community Resource Team

The Community Resource Team supported 272 people with a developmental disability in Thunder Bay and the surrounding district, comprised of 250 adults and 22 children over the 2020-2021 fiscal year. Many people received more than one CRT service.

Support was provided in the following areas:

- Speech Language
- Health Care
- Social Work
- Child and Adult Positive Behavioural Supports
- Single Plan of Care planning (partnership with children's sector)
- Forensic Behavioural Support (partnership with Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre)
- Occupational Therapy between Ivy Juan and Partners In Rehab-Lori Knott
- Behavioural Consultations
- Eligibility Assessments to see if people qualify for developmental services
- Access to specialized services through the North Community Network of Specialized Care including specialized accommodation funding

Whenever possible we have moved services to a virtual model but there are still times when for health and safety or for best practice reasons the clinicians will meet people face to face. It has been a challenging year with the COVID-19 Pandemic switching from a typical model of face-to-face support to other modes of delivering service like videoconferencing. In roles like health care and occupational therapy the focus became on, "How do we deliver service in a way that is meaningful and as safe as possible?" Much of the clinician's time in the early stages of the pandemic was on educating the people we support on what social distancing was, good hand hygiene, cough etiquette, how to grocery shop safely, and how to video conference effectively. As time progressed, we were able to get back to focusing more on clinical goals again.

In March of 2021, Community Resource Team employees helped to successfully plan and implement the COVID-19 vaccination clinic that OPTIONS NORTHWEST ran and many of the people we supported in CRT were able to get vaccinated. This was a very exciting day and gave renewed hope for returning to our previous freedoms.

There have been many creative ways demonstrated this year on how to reach people. The dedication and perseverance of the employees of CRT has not gone unnoticed. They have a special way of looking at the bright side of a situation and capitalizing on that. It has been amazing to work with such a talented bunch.

Submitted By: Lisa Maki



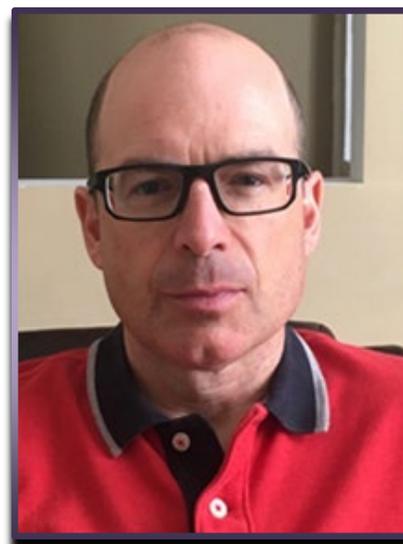
# Community Resource Team



Lisa Maki  
Manager of Community Services



Lilly Gifkins  
Health Care Consultant



Joel McCartney  
Psychological Associate



Suzanne Posthumus  
Community Resource Consultant



Brandon Madore  
Community Resource Consultant



Patti Spade  
Social Worker



*creative*  
THERAPY ASSOCIATES

Speech Language Services





Amanda Anderson  
Positive Behaviour Support Facilitator



Loni Rudnicki  
Positive Behaviour Support Facilitator



Melanie Benham  
Positive Behaviour Support Facilitator



Sherry Glena  
Positive Behaviour Support Facilitator



Simeon Ostap  
Positive Behaviour Support Facilitator



Ivy Juan  
Occupational Therapist



Lori Knott  
Occupational Therapist

Not Pictured:  
Amy Massalin (LOA)  
Positive Behaviour Support Facilitator



# World Autism Awareness Day

## April 2, 2020



### Autism: the positives

Understanding, embracing and celebrating different ways of thinking and doing can release the true power of the autistic mind. Here we look at the positive features of autism.

<div style="margin-bottom: 10px;"> <b>Attention to detail</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thoroughness</li> <li>• Accuracy</li> </ul> </div> <div style="margin-bottom: 10px;"> <b>Deep focus</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concentration</li> <li>• Freedom from distraction</li> </ul> </div> <div style="margin-bottom: 10px;"> <b>Observational skills</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen, look, learn approach</li> <li>• Fact finding</li> </ul> </div> <div style="margin-bottom: 10px;"> <b>Absorb and retain facts</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent long term memory</li> <li>• Superior recall</li> </ul> </div> <div style="margin-bottom: 10px;"> <b>Visual skills</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual learning and recall</li> <li>• Detail-focussed</li> </ul> </div> <div style="margin-bottom: 10px;"> <b>Expertise</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-depth knowledge</li> <li>• High level of skills</li> </ul> </div>	<div style="margin-bottom: 10px;"> <b>Methodical approach</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analytical</li> <li>• Spotting patterns, repetition</li> </ul> </div> <div style="margin-bottom: 10px;"> <b>Novel approaches</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unique thought processes</li> <li>• Innovative solutions</li> </ul> </div> <div style="margin-bottom: 10px;"> <b>Creativity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distinctive imagination</li> <li>• Expression of ideas</li> </ul> </div> <div style="margin-bottom: 10px;"> <b>Tenacity and resilience</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determination</li> <li>• Challenge opinions</li> </ul> </div> <div style="margin-bottom: 10px;"> <b>Accepting of difference</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less likely to judge others</li> <li>• May question norms</li> </ul> </div> <div style="margin-bottom: 10px;"> <b>Integrity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Honesty, loyalty</li> <li>• Commitment</li> </ul> </div>
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**Remember**

Every experience of autism is **unique**. No one person will identify with every positive feature of autism. We all have **individual** skills, attributes and characteristics that are as unique as our personalities – this is the **power of neurodiversity**.

Harriet Cannon  
Disability Services, February 2018  
and Adapted by Françoise Voin: www.francoisevo.com

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS



Brandon from the Community Resource Team (CRT) in his World Autism Awareness Day Shirt, for the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual World Autism Awareness Day on April 2, 2020. Brandon and many others, show their support on this day and during the month of April, by wearing their shirt and/or showcasing something blue, in hopes of bringing awareness and education about individuals and families who live with and/or are impacted by Autism or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

### Thinking creatively during COVID-19

Adaptable, portable, work surfaces for the at home worker.

Repurposed item that was already in the home was used to create a unique workspace.

This amazing desk can be adapted to allow a person to sit on the floor, sit on a chair or even stand while working.

It is lightweight, so that it can easily be moved into any room.

There is room to spread out your papers, although it is not very wide so the table close by is necessary for a beverage and more workspace.

This is the creative set up of a CRT employee. Wonder who? 😊

...Suzanne Posthumus



## Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)

The Community Resource Team (CRT) participates within in the community of Thunder Bay by joining committees, acting as a resource for people and agencies, networking to build strong relationships and “thinking outside the box” to meet all people’s needs.

A member of CRT, Suzanne Posthumus has been part of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) with Lakehead Public Schools for several years.

SEAC is a mandated, advisory committee legislated by the Ministry of Education and appointed by the Board of Education and

- Provides important advice on special education to their local board or school authority.
- Comprised of trustees and representatives of local associations that further the interests and well-being of exceptional children or adults.
- Makes recommendations to their board on any matter affecting the establishment, development and delivery of special education programs and services for exceptional students.
- Provides an advocacy role and advocacy information for families.

Suzanne recently agreed to accept the position of chair with the SEAC committee and is looking forward to learning new skills in this role.



By: Suzanne Posthumus

## Confederation College Developmental Service Worker Advisory Committee

OPTIONS NORTHWEST has had ongoing representation at the Program Advisory Committee level for the Confederation College, Developmental Services Worker (DSW) Program. Lisa Maki has been chairing the DSW Advisory Committee for several years taking over this responsibility from Bernard Travis a previous Executive Director of OPTIONS NORTHWEST.

To ensure quality in post-secondary programs, the Advisory Committee plays an instrumental role in the development of new programs and the monitoring of existing programs. Program advisory committees represent a critical resource in ensuring the relevancy and application of college programs and meeting the needs of business and industry.

The DSW Advisory Committee is made up of a cross-section of persons external to the college who have a direct interest in, and a diversity of experience and expertise related to the human service and educational areas addressed by the DSW program.

Some of the topics typically discussed at meetings are program learning outcomes, curriculum, patterns in employment, student placements, and trends/potential areas for growth in the field. As OPTIONS NORTHWEST has traditionally hired many DSW graduates we continue to work with the college seeing this as benefiting all parties.

Submitted By: Lisa Maki



I have registered OPTION NORTHWEST to be part of Thunder Bay Public Library's loaning of technology devices. Many of the people we work with do not have access to or cannot afford technology devices so it is nice to have this option to borrow. Here are the instructions below on how to support people with the process:

Please follow this process when referring clients.

1. Complete this [Google form](#) with your client's information and which Library location they would like to pick up the device from. Please include any other relevant information, for example if you will be picking up the device for them
2. Library staff will contact your client when the device is ready for them to pick up.
3. To borrow a device, **your client will need some form of ID.** If this is a concern, please let us know via the referral form and we will get in touch to discuss options.

Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions about this process.

Again, you can access the form here: [TBPL Referral Form](#)

Laura: [lprinselaar@tbpl.ca](mailto:lprinselaar@tbpl.ca) or 624-4204

Submitted By: Lisa Maki

**Bridging the  
DIGITAL  
DIVIDE  
Loan Program**

Thunder Bay Public Library

Tablets and rocket hubs (free, unlimited portable wifi) are now available to borrow from the Library!

The goal of the program is to bridge the digital divide by loaning these items to people who need them the most. There are over 25 community organizations working with the Library to refer people to the program. A referral is currently required.

For more information about the program and our current community partners, please visit [www.tbpl.ca/digitaldivide](http://www.tbpl.ca/digitaldivide) or call the Library at **345-8275** (Monday through Friday from 10 am to 4 pm).

**Contact**  
phone 345-8275  
website [www.tbpl.ca](http://www.tbpl.ca)  
email [comments@tbpl.ca](mailto:comments@tbpl.ca)



Ryley from the Nicholetts group home, is one of a few recipients of our Pandemic Superhero Award (created by the Social Work team members of CRT). Ryley is a prime example of a true Superhero, especially during this past year. Ryley always does his absolute best to keep himself and everyone around him safe. Even though it is tough at times to follow every public health direction, Ryley does so effortlessly and has sacrificed many things that he enjoys doing, all for the greater good! Ryley is a team leader in showing others how it's done. I am happy and proud to award him with this award and recognized his constant efforts to fight COVID-19!

Submitted By: Brandon Madore



## A Positive Side of COVID-19

The Pandemic has affected each and everyone of us in one way or another. This story is about how one individual is “riding” through it.

Some of you might remember a story of Taylor and a horse, Azrael, from a few years ago. The bond these two shared then has only grown thanks in part to COVID-19.

Prior to the pandemic Taylor was a very busy guy having 4 part-time jobs, a fair social circle and his horse. (Now his horse). Mid March 2020, like everyone else locally, that all changed. His volunteer jobs were terminated, March of Dimes was closed to in person and his paying job became quite sporadic and non-existent. All of this however has led to a wonderful opportunity! Yes there are many opportunities even during challenging times. Taylor and his horse have more time to spend together. Azrael is Taylor’s best friend and therapist, extremely sensitive to Taylor’s needs. For a guy like Taylor with huge sensory issues the therapeutic advantages of equine therapy is mind blowing.

Like everyone else, the loss of the life we knew before COVID-19 can be very depressing for Taylor, but a few simple words “want to go ride your horse?” will get him to bounce up and get going. As Taylor mounts up so does a smile, one that comes from the tips of his toes on up.

We are so grateful to all the kind individuals who help make this happen for Taylor and Azrael. It does take a village, a village of care and kindness.

So thanks to all who go the extra, to ensure the safety and well-being of all the Taylor’s of the world. And a special thanks to those who play a part in supporting this very special relationship.

Take care all, God Bless and stay safe,

Happy Trails... Submitted By: Lori & Taylor



## Community Services 2020-2021

The year 2020 will go down as one of the most challenging and difficult times in recent memory. The world was diagnosed with a Pandemic and we became introduced to a virus called COVID-19.

The agency moved quickly to form a team of staff called the Pandemic Team to oversee Policies and Procedures relating to the Pandemic, Ministry documents and implementation of specific Guidelines and Directives received from them and daily meetings to discuss safety of our employees and the individuals we support.

For the first three months the team met everyday to ensure safety measures were in place and we were following what the Ministry and/or Public Health was recommending during different stages of the ongoing Pandemic. As time progressed and initiatives were in place to protect the safety of all, these meetings were reduced to 3 times per week and continue to be scheduled to this day.

This Pandemic and the guidelines put forth from the Ministry has really made it hard for the people supported to not do the things they love to do daily. Everything from going shopping, to visiting family to going to a concert has been put on hold. These have been very trying times for people supported as it is hard to just shut something off or down without an explanation that can be comprehended. Not fair is the best way I can describe what has happened to everyone this past year.

However, with every bad situation some good always comes through at OPTIONS NORTHWEST. The amazing work done by our employees who have adapted to do things different for the people we support is simply amazing. Throughout this report you will see pictures of individuals doing different things to keep them happy and engaged but most of all safe from the virus.

Safety has always been our number one priority and I can proudly say that thus far during the first year of this Pandemic we have had no one supported in our group living homes contract the COVID-19 Virus. This is an amazing accomplishment and further to that we only had one home deemed in an outbreak due to an employee having tested positive. This is something we here at OPTIONS are extremely proud of but could not have achieved without the hard work by the people supported, the employees and their respective families and friends being diligent in adhering to the guidelines that were set out from our Ministry.

Last but not least perhaps our biggest accomplishment of the year at OPTIONS NORTHWEST is the vaccination clinic that we held for the people supported on March 26, 2021. In one single day we were able to vaccinate 102 people. It was amazing to see the excitement of all the people supported and employees with such huge smiles on their faces (under their masks of course!) 😊 knowing that this is one step closer to moving into a more normal lifestyle again. This was truly a date that will forever be etched in the history books at OPTIONS. This was our first dose of the vaccine and the tentative date for the 2<sup>nd</sup> dose of the vaccine is July 16, 2021. We look forward to seeing everyone that day.

In closing I am extremely proud of how our agency and the Community Services Department has handled the pandemic and keeping people safe from COVID-19. It is truly an honour and a blessing knowing that we have such supportive and caring staff that work with the people supported who really needed us in order to keep them safe. I cannot express enough gratitude for all the hard work, the dedication and the ongoing care everyone provides for the individuals, your work does not go unnoticed. Here is to hoping that next year we are moving past this Pandemic.

Submitted By: Mark Beazley, Director of Community Services



# Community Service Department Supervisors



Chris Wiseman  
Manager of  
Community Services



Alissa Pradal  
Supervisor of Kenwood,  
Langworthy & Passport



Amanda Lebel  
Temporary Supervisor  
of Hodder & Dacre



Andrea Johnson  
Supervisor of Hodder,  
Dacre & Passport



Donna Tienhaara  
Supervisor of Glengary  
& Nicholetts



Josie Vickruck  
Supervisor of Francis  
& Rosslyn



Lori McCoy  
Supervisor of SIL, CPS  
& Home Share



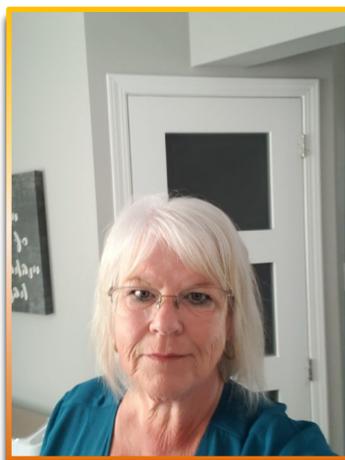
Nanette Vester  
Supervisor of Frederica,  
St. James, & Tuscany



Sarah Byzewski  
Supervisor of SIL, CPS  
& Home Share



Shannon Vanlenthe  
Supervisor of  
Market & Shuniah



Sherry Devereaux  
Temporary Supervisor of  
Syndicate



Vanessa Bowles  
Supervisor of Syndicate  
& Passport



**OPTIONS northwest Personal Support Services**  
**Schedule of Receipts and Expenditures**  
*For the year ended March 31, 2021*

	2021 <i>(unaudited)</i>	2020 <i>(unaudited)</i>
<b>Receipts</b>		
Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services	17,464,183	16,081,191
Client contribution payments	875,138	909,251
Interest earned	13,318	33,449
Other revenue	491,480	1,151,256
	<b>18,844,119</b>	<b>18,175,147</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>		
Salaries and benefits	13,817,784	14,706,302
Salaries and benefits - pandemic pay	554,543	-
Salaries and benefits - wage enhancement	492,427	-
Staff training	30,230	57,561
Building occupancy	971,586	717,332
Travel and communication	274,007	493,104
Supplies and equipment	1,043,974	894,898
Other program service expenditures	1,235,301	1,231,391
	<b>18,419,852</b>	<b>18,100,588</b>
	<b>424,267</b> <sup>1</sup>	<b>74,559</b>
<sup>1</sup> MCCSS funding deferred for use in March 31, 2022 fiscal year	171,000	
Repayable to MCCSS for wage enhancement funding	226,883	
Unrestricted surplus	26,384	
	<u>424,267</u>	

To view the complete set of financial statements, including the Independent Auditor's Report, or for any other comments or questions regarding this report, contact the Organization's offices at:  
95 Cumberland Street North, Thunder Bay ON P7A 4M1 phone (807) 344-4994 fax (807) 346-5811

