

PlainTalk

NEWS FROM OUR COMMUNITY

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THE WAY I SEE IT

John Klassen, Executive Director

A LOOK AT THE FUTURE OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES IN ONTARIO

The Ministry of Community and Social Services recently announced the proclamation of some sections of the Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008. This new legislation, generally referred to as the Social Inclusion Act, will replace the 36-year-old Developmental Services Act on July 1st, 2011 and provides the framework for developmental services transformation. The Ministry has stated that this transformation will introduce greater fairness, equity and sustainability in the developmental services system.

We would all agree that the old Developmental Services Act was long overdue for repeal and replacement. This new legislation—with language of inclusion, self-determination, accessibility, portability and direct funding—gives us hope that people with disabilities and their families will be the beneficiaries of positive changes in the system.

How will the system be changed to create greater fairness, equity and sustainability?

What we know now is that the Ministry will designate one agency in each of the regions in Ontario as an Application Entity. These entities will be announced in January 2011 and they will have the responsibility to:

- Process applications for developmental services;
- Provide information about community-based services;
- Determine eligibility for services;
- Assist people with the application process;
- Determine and re-assess people's service and support needs;
- Assist people with service navigation to help them understand how the service system works and match them to appropriate and available resources;
- Maintain a waitlist and provide waitlist support; and
- Administer direct funding.

These are functions that are currently mostly performed and coordinated by a community collaborative process in Prince Edward and Hastings counties through what is called a Pressures and Priorities Committee. This committee—with representation from all ten (10) developmental services agencies in the two counties—meets regularly to consider those people on the waiting list who require services. The committee then considers the available resources and whether these resources could appropriately meet the needs of those people on the waiting list.

The Pressures and Priorities Committee in Hastings and Prince Edward counties has been very effective in matching available resources to people who are waiting for supports and services. Agencies come to the table prepared to offer ideas and contribute available resources so that people on the waiting list will receive the services they so desperately require.

The Ministry believes the new Application Entities will make it easier for people with disabilities and families to access needed supports and services. Time will tell if this will be the case or if we will simply have costly bureaucratic application centres eating up time, energy and resources and raising hopes for the many who are languishing on waiting lists and waiting desperately for necessary supports and services. Will developmental services agencies be as eager to bring resources to the table if they are no longer the first point of contact for people with disabilities and families? Will agencies no longer have a face to face relationship with people with disabilities and families and therefore lose the empathic appreciation for their urgent needs? Will Application Entities act in the interests of people waiting for services or be guided and driven by their mandate to ration limited Ministry-funded services and supports?

We can only hope that Application Entities will endeavor to work with community collaborative access processes and continue to garner the good will and cooperation that has been built over time. Without this, they may simply become ineffective, bureaucratic and costly gatekeepers for the Ministry, while the number of people waiting for services grows longer.

OUR NEWSLETTER IS A WINNER!

Patti Gillman, Executive Assistant

We were absolutely delighted to learn that our newsletter, PlainTalk, was selected as the 2010 recipient of the Community Living Ontario Newsletter "Overall" Award!

A letter we received from the Awards Committee put it this way: "This award is judged on quality of writing, originality and content of entire newsletter; sensitivity to language and labeling of people; and consistent with Community Living Ontario's vision statement. The newsletter should report on more than the organization's activities but should also speak to and educate the broader community about issues that are important to people and/or related to intellectual disability. The reviewers felt that your newsletter was well-written, edited and easy-to-read. It offers informative and thought-provoking news and updates on services and supports and the difference/impact it is making in people's lives. It also includes information and perspectives on broader issues concerning the developmental services sector and about the delivery of quality services and supports to assist people's goals, choices and direction for their lives in the community. There is evidence of respectful, positive language and portrayal of people who have an intellectual disability."

We would like to thank Community Living Ontario for this acknowledgement of our efforts. We put our hearts and souls into making PlainTalk the best newsletter we can and, going forward, we will strive to continue to meet—and maybe even exceed—the needs and expectations of our readers.



L-R: Keith Powell, Community Living Ontario, Sharon Wright and Sandra Coates of Plainfield Community Homes and Karen Gledhill, Community Living Ontario

WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU

Please take a few moments to complete a brief survey about our newsletter. As we are constantly trying to improve PlainTalk, your answers are very important to us. The more information we have about what people like to see in the newsletter, the better we can meet your needs. To complete the survey online, please go to www.surveymonkey.com/s/N3VCPZY or to receive a hard copy of the survey, contact Patti Gillman at 613.969.7407, ext. 30 or pgillman@plainfield.org

OUR EMPLOYEES ARE BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL

Joan Greenwood – Director of Human Resources

Plainfield Community Homes is proud of its staff members, who are contributing to our community and building social capital. In this edition of PlainTalk, we interview Janet Chouinard, Community Services Manager.

Janet, who do you currently volunteer with?

I am currently a volunteer with Three Oaks Foundation, an organization that provides sheltering services for abused women and their children.

In 1983, the organization was founded by a small group of dedicated and caring individuals. In its inaugural year, safe shelter and services were provided to 260 abused women and their children. Presently, Three Oaks is a 16-bed shelter, staffed 24 hours/day, 7 days/week by a staff of 16 full-time employees. We offer a 24-hour emergency crisis line, safety planning, safe shelter and a variety of services to women and their children. To-date, shelter services have been provided to 36,731 women and their children.

Three Oaks is an organization that prides itself on community partnerships. To this end, they participate in the Quinte Co-Ordinating Committee, the Dedicated Domestic Court, Quinte Victims Fund, the Domestic Violence Assault Responses Program Center and the Affordable Housing Action Network (AHAN).

What is your role in the organization as a volunteer?

I am a Board member and have been on this community board for three years. I am also a member of the Personnel Committee.

What is the mission of the organization?

To provide, as part of a comprehensive network of services for women and children victimized by violence, a safe shelter, advocacy, education and non-judgmental support from a feminist perspective. In this instance, feminism is recognizing the oppression of women and having a commitment to respecting individual differences; respecting the rights of all persons; working towards equality for all women; ensuring accessibility of services; and providing opportunity and protecting the right to exercise choice within an equal society.

Do you do any fundraising on behalf of the organization?

Three Oaks has been fortunate enough to have developed strong community partnerships. In particular, we have been able to participate with the Shelter Foundation (sponsored by Royal LePage ProAlliance) in joint fundraising events. Recently, we participated in a fundraising concert, sponsored by the Shelter Foundation at the Empire Theatre. A local band, “All You Need is Love” donated their time to this event. The Shelter Foundation raised \$20,000.00 at this concert and the proceeds were donated to Three Oaks.

Fundraising is certainly an issue that all non-profit organizations face on an ongoing basis and so the lessons learned in my volunteer role are helpful in my job and vice-versa in my volunteer role.

Why do you participate as a volunteer within your community?

Originally, I felt that it was time for me to give back to my community. My children were older and more independent and I had the time to do this. I felt that my knowledge of the developmental services sector would be of benefit, especially in assisting mothers and children with developmental disabilities.

I have truly come to understand the importance of building social capital and that it is a mutually satisfying experience. I can contribute my knowledge and, in turn, I am constantly learning concepts that will benefit me in my chosen career. This agency is also a non-profit agency, funded by the Ministry of Community & Social Services, so there is that connection between my own work and my volunteer role.

I have gained an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of Board members and how difficult it can be to make decisions as a Board. I have come to value the contributions that these dedicated volunteers bring to the organization that they support.

If you know of a colleague, who is doing his/her part to build social capital, we would love to hear from you.

Janet, we take our hats off to you. Where would our country and our community be without the contributions of all the dedicated volunteers like you who give of themselves for the benefit of the community. Our staff members are building social capital each and every day.

2009-10 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Patti Gillman, Executive Assistant

At our Annual General Meeting in June, we presented our 2010 Community Partner of the Year Award to Loyalist College. Sharon Wright, Manager of Community Development and Volunteer Services, recognized the college’s contributions to Plainfield Community Homes which “have strengthened people’s level of skill, their social network, their confidence and respect while, at the same time, providing excellent educational opportunities.” Maureen Piercy, President of Loyalist College, was on hand to receive the award.



L-R: Maureen Piercy and John Klassen



L-R: Sharon Wright and Florence Fleming

In keeping with this year’s AGM theme, “A Celebration of Community Life ... from Presence to Contribution,” we were treated to some wonderful Shared Values presentations by staff members and people we support. Our Volunteer of the Year award was presented to Florence Fleming, a member of our External Rights Committee. Plainfield Community Homes was presented with an Affiliate Membership to Community Living Ontario by Keith Powell, Executive Director of CLO, and CLO Regional Director Theresa Somerton. And last, but certainly not least, Ministry of Community and Social Services Program Supervisor, Ken Fuller, delivered greetings from the Ministry.

WE GET BY WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM OUR FRIENDS!

MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN OUR COMMUNITY

Patti Gillman, Executive Assistant



Cleaning up after your pet at the Quinte Dog Park at Belleville’s East Zwicks Park became not only more convenient, but also more environmentally friendly, thanks to Plainfield Community Homes and Union Gas. Made possible through a donation to Plainfield Community Homes from our friends at Union Gas, a Dogipot® Pet Station was installed in the Spring near the entrance to the dog park. This economical and logical dog waste system, both durable and attractive, includes a dispenser with biodegradable poly bags, a trash receptacle, green fiberglass telescoping post and an aluminum reflective pet sign.

Sharon Wright, Manager of Community Development and Volunteer Services at Plainfield Community Homes said: “This donation has opened several doors of opportunity for people we support and has created a community partnership with a focus of working together to achieve success. One of the women we support makes regular visits to the park to ensure that the bag dispenser is full and, in doing so, has met some local pet owners and their pets.”

“Union Gas actively encourages and promotes environmental responsibility throughout our distribution area,” said Phil Langlois, Utility Service Construction Manager at Union Gas. “We are pleased to partner with Plainfield Community Homes in their efforts to build and sustain a healthy and successful community.”

Background L-R:
Jody Smith & Phil Langlois (Union Gas), Dianne Beach & Sherry (Plainfield Community Homes)
Foreground L-R:
Blake Moynes and Sambo (Quinte Dog Park Association)

... AND MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN A YOUNG PERSON’S LIFE

Janet Chouinard, Community Services Manager

Our funding sources do not afford us the specialized equipment that can be such a crucial part of providing children and youth with quality supports. Take, for example, the portable mechanical ramp that Joshua and his Associate Family needed to provide accessibility support to Joshua.

The good news is that, each year, U.A. Local 463 Plumbers, Steamfitters and Welders contacts various not-for-profit organizations within its jurisdiction, including Plainfield Community Homes, to offer financial assistance for the purchase of equipment to assist children and youth for which there are no other funding sources.

And so, with a most generous donation of \$5,000.00 from U.A. Local 463, we were able to purchase the ramp for Joshua!

Without the incredible generosity of our donors, we would not be able to provide such unique and necessary individualized supports to the children and youth in our Associate Family Program.



Joshua on his new ramp

MY BROTHER ZACH: A Grade 4 Speech

By Faith J. Klassen

When you are not given a lot of time to write a speech, it is a good idea to write about a topic you already know about. It saves on the time needed to do the research. That’s why I am going to talk about something I am very familiar with. Judges, Ladies and Gentlemen, Fellow Students, I want to tell you about my 21 year old brother Zach. My brother Zach is an interesting guy. He lives in a nice house with a couple of flat screen TVs and a big soaker tub. He is interested in cars, pizza and coming home to visit us on the weekend. My brother Zach also has autism. Autism is a neurological disorder meaning it is all about the brain. Zach’s brain is wired differently in some ways causing him to do and say things other than what people expect. People with autism have struggles in three main areas: communication, social interaction and repetitive behaviours and restricted interests.

Communication is the ability to pass on information. It can be done verbally, with gestures such as pointing or waving, or by writing. Many people with autism are unable to talk or have few words. They have a tough time having a conversation with others. They may use strange words or repeat themselves. They may go off topic. Having a conversation with Zach can be quite challenging, as he only talks about things he wants to talk about. Zach also talks in questions. I know what he is thinking about by what question he asks me. The question I hear the most from Zach is “Faith, when over?” When Zach asks me this, which is about a million times a day, I know he is worried about what is going to happen next. Zach worries a lot about what is going to happen to him. He has a tough time enjoying anything because he is worried about the future. When Zach asks “Faith, when over?” I know he wants me to say “soon” and for a short time he will calm down and relax. I like that I can help him by simply saying “soon” even though it can get pretty annoying when you are trying to concentrate on an episode of Sponge Bob. Sometimes Zach’s problems with communication can get quite funny in our family. Zach will sometimes use his own word for something. For example, Zach cannot say “hiccups” so instead he says “hibubs” which for some reason our whole family started saying. My mom has embarrassed me a few times in public by talking about my hibubs.

Social interactions are reciprocal actions between people. It is what we do all day at school and never really think is difficult. We talk, we play, we know things about each other; in other words, we interact. I know what my friends like and don’t like. I know who I get along with the best. I know to behave differently when I am with my friends compared to when I am with an adult or a stranger. Zach does not understand these things. When he goes to the bank, he will talk to anyone he sees like he knows them. He may even get mad if they don’t answer his questions the way the rest of us know how to do. Zach also gets caught on certain people and will talk about them nonstop. Zach tends to get stuck on our neighbour, Barry. He will ask what Barry is doing, what he is eating and where he will be going later, as if we know the answers. He will watch for Barry’s van in his driveway and get really excited if it is there. Yet, when we take Zach over to visit Barry, all Zach will say is “Hi, Barry” and head back to our house. Barry knows that Zach is very interested in him but it always surprises us how quickly that social interaction is over.

Sometimes people with autism have repetitive behaviours that can look strange to others who don’t know them. They may rock back and forth, spin, walk on their toes, wiggle their fingers or flap their arms. Zach is a big arm flapper when he is excited,

happy or angry. I have to watch myself when walking by him when he is emotional because he has really long arms. Zach will also jump up and down which is like a mini-earthquake. Sometimes the repetitive behaviours can get really irritating. When Zach was a teenager, he could be very irritating like most teenagers. He would get in our pool and constantly splash us. He just couldn’t stop splashing us and laughing his head off. We solved that problem by finding him a swimming buddy named Mark. Mark was a teenager also with autism who irritated his parents in the pool by demanding they constantly splash him. You should have seen Mark and Zach in the pool together. Zach would splash Mark and Mark would jump up and down squealing with glee. The only problem was that when my friends and I would get in the pool after the teenagers were done, there wouldn’t be much water left. I am glad they now swim together at a pool in Trenton.



My brother Zach

When many people think about autism, they think about Dustin Hoffman in the movie Rain Man. Mr. Hoffman played a guy with autism who could do these incredible math calculations in his head. While it is unusual to see that kind of gift among people with autism, I am here to tell you that it certainly does happen. I know a girl with autism named Hannah who has some special talents. You can give Hannah any date, and she can tell you what day of the week that date fell on. For example, if I asked Hannah what day of the week was January 14th, 2000, she would know it was a Friday. That was the day I was born for any fans listening today. Hannah could also tell me what she has done for everyday of her life. Isn’t that amazing? She can remember her schedule for every day of her 13 years of life. I’m 10 and I can’t remember what I did yesterday. Hannah and Zach are so interesting.

I have so many memories of Zach that make me smile. He is my human alarm clock on the weekends, playing his tapes really loud at exactly 9:00 to wake me up. Zach will send me cards with animal pictures on them because he knows I like getting mail. He has this big picture of me in his bedroom that he constantly shows people who visit his house. Probably one of the funniest sights in our neighbourhood is when my mother walks holding hands with Zach. Zach is 6 feet 6 inches tall while my mother is 5 feet tall and getting shorter everyday. I worry that someday I’ll hear her voice but there won’t be anyone there. They are quite a sight on their stroll and my dad and I try not to laugh out loud.

Zach is not like most big brothers but I love him just the way he is. I can’t imagine him any other way.

RESPECT & DIGNITY: ‘TIL DEATH DO US PART

Chris Semark, Director of Services
Jim Mortlock, Community Services Manager and Palliative Care Team Member

We all fear the day when someone close to us is diagnosed with an illness or has reached the age where their body is shutting down. We often depend on the family physician and specialist to explain this to the person and family members. For some people with a developmental disability this is a very confusing discussion and often one that has been avoided. Life expectancy for a person with a disability is now within five years of a non-disabled person. There is an increased frequency of death from an age related illness. We need to ensure that people with disabilities are supported in the way they want to be. This is very challenging in situations where people have been isolated from family members during illnesses and times of death. They have little or no experience of death and grieving. Communication barriers can cause confusion or distort the information being presented.

The dying process is an inevitable part of the human experience. Since 2005, the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care has been planning strategies to develop an “End of Life” Care Network which integrates service delivery for people through the Community Care Access Centres. Part of Plainfield Community Homes’ involvement is through representation on the Hospice Palliative Care Team of Quinte Region which has members from long-term care facilities, community living organizations, nursing services, physicians and other professionals.

As people live longer as a result of good medical and home care, hospitals are no longer seen as the most appropriate place for incurable illness. Hospice Palliative Care is the term used to describe a coordinated team approach to maintaining quality of life for a dying person in their home. It focuses on intensive communication among service provider and family members and effective pain and symptom management. If a person or their family eventually chooses to end their life journey in a hospice building or in hospital, palliative care can be provided in the same way there.

It is important to support everyone during terminal illnesses to help them understand what is going to happen and to give them some options as to how they would like their end of life experience to be. Understanding their wishes and what will make them comfortable is how we show respect. Recognizing the importance of this is the responsibility of agencies to the people we support, their families, staff members and other professional services.

This Fall, our Community Services Managers Wendy Farrell, Irene Robbins, Sue Valentine and Jim Mortlock are participating in Level One Multidisciplinary Palliative Care Education. This program, funded by the Community Care Access Centre, will take place one day per week, at Hastings Manor. Some of the topics covered include: Communication, Disease Management, Psychological and Spiritual Considerations, Death Management, Grief and Bereavement, Delirium and Dementia, Cancer and Care for the Caregiver.

Of practical interest to Plainfield Community Homes are the new universal assessment tools such as the Palliative Performance Scale which determines support requirements at various stages toward death. There are also tools for pain measurement and spiritual needs which are used by the team to best support the person’s needs. Helping people and their families to make informed decisions about D.N.R. (Do Not Resuscitate) and funeral or memorial arrangements are part of the training that will be very useful for this agency’s staff to assist with if requested.

While the topic of dying and death may seem morbid or not a subject to discuss for some, it is something everyone will experience and, if prolonged by illness or disease, involves decisions and planning.

Here is an example of an experience of Hospice Palliative Care for Rita G.

Rita was diagnosed in May with an incurable illness and a prognosis that suggested she would not live much longer. Her family had confidence that her support staff could give Rita the care in her own home that everyone agreed Rita seemed to prefer.

To prepare for her to have the best possible comfort and support, a team was quickly formed to accomplish this. Rita’s brother and her sister in-law, who was also connected with Hospice Quinte, were included. Our Community Services Managers were also involved: Wendy Farrell spoke to staff about transferring Rita safely and positioning her; Jim Mortlock spoke about Palliative Care and the available resources to support Rita and those who would provide her care; and Irene Robbins contacted the Community Care Access Centre to arrange Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy to assess Rita’s physical needs. For example, she needed a special mattress to accommodate her for long periods of time in bed. Palliative care nurses were provided daily to assess Rita’s pain medication needs so that staff could administer it when she needed it.

Rita’s team of staff was attentive to her needs and supported her to spend time with friends but also respected her when she needed time alone.

In addition to all of her medical needs being met, Rita’s comfort and happiness were enhanced by having her hairdresser cut and style her hair in her room. She was given a pedicure and a manicure and a number of other small pamperings to make her feel good. A transfer ambulance service was hired to take Rita outside her home to enjoy the park and feel the sunshine on her face.

Rita passed peacefully in the comfort of her own home with those who cared for her on a personal level. When Rita left her home that night, her support staff ensured that she was dressed in her favorite outfit and her hair was perfectly styled.

Rita was truly respected until the end and passed with dignity.

CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Hilary Tugwood, Director of Quality, Planning and Development
Sandra Coates, Continuous Quality Manager

The employees at Plainfield Community Homes continue to provide quality supports to people and their families, and are always seeking ways to do things better. We continue to monitor Basic Assurances and Personal Outcome Measures data to ensure that we stay on track with our Accreditation requirements. A year has passed since we had the Council on Quality and Leadership (CQL) review team on site and since then we have continued to collect and analyze our data in order to learn about what is working well and what areas we need to focus some attention upon.

We recently conducted a satisfaction survey with the people we support which included visual aids for all those who wanted that support. The number of people who completed and returned the survey was impressive. We are looking at the results and will take that information to our Continuous Quality Improvement Committee for feedback and action strategies.

Plainfield Community Homes is looking forward to the last two components of Quality Measures 2005 to be reviewed by CQL. Those components are Community Life© and Responsive Services©.

Our review of these components is scheduled to take place in April 2011. We are very excited about this!



BOARD OFFICER ELECTIONS

Patti Gillman, Executive Assistant

In June 2010, Tom Raycroft—the former Vice-President of our Board of Governors—was elected as President. Tom has been a member of the Board since 1995. Martha Carr, Board President from 2002 until 2010, was thanked for her many years of dedication and commitment and was presented with a token of the Board’s appreciation. Mrs. Carr extended her thanks to the Board, saying that it had been her pleasure to have served as President. Mrs. Carr has been a member of the Board of Governors since 1987 and she will continue as Past President.

Former Board Secretary/Treasurer, Paul Richardson, was elected to the position of Vice-President and Floyd Clapp was elected as Secretary/Treasurer.

The members of the Board of Governors for 2010-11 are as follows:

Tom Raycroft President	Paul Richardson Vice-President	Floyd Clapp Secretary/Treasurer
Harold Brennan	Martha Carr	Evan Leuty
April Nelles	Janice Quade	Martin Smit

RENOVATIONS AT OUR HOME ON THE WEB

Our corporate website at www.plainfield.org has been given a fresh new look!

The website has been in the redesign and revision stages for some months, with the ultimate intent of having it look and feel similar to our corporate Intranet and to better reflect the services and supports that our organization provides today. We hope you will agree that the website is nicely designed, well-informed and, most of all, user friendly.

As always, our website will continue to be a work in progress. We are committed to ensuring that the information it contains remains timely and useful. If you have suggestions of content you would like to see incorporated into the website, please feel free to call Patti Gillman at 613.969.7407, ext. 30 or send an e-mail to pgillman@plainfield.org.