

# PlainTalk

## NEWS FROM OUR COMMUNITY

Newsletter for Plainfield Community Homes • Volume 1 • Issue 6 • Spring/Summer 2009

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If you would like to be added to the PlainTalk mailing list, please send your name, address and phone number, including area code, to PlainTalk Newsletter  
91 Millennium Parkway  
Belleville, Ontario K8N 4Z5  
or by e-mail to [inquiries@plainfield.org](mailto:inquiries@plainfield.org)

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## THE WAY I SEE IT

John Klassen - Executive Director

In recent months I have enjoyed attending several team meetings and speaking with people we support and our staff. I have met with thirteen (13) teams and have been quite impressed with the caliber of the questions and the discussion. These questions and comments can range from concerns about the need for more accessible transportation to my views on the future of Plainfield Community Homes. In this article I thought I would share a few of these questions and my responses to them.

### Question:

Now that we have a copy of the strategic planning report which includes the most critical issues to be addressed by Plainfield Community Homes over the next 3 to 5 years, what can we expect?

### Response:

The strength of a good strategic planning process is evident when we respond to all that good input from the many stakeholders by striking an effective course of action to address those critical issues. A number of task forces and committees are presently working on the critical issue areas and will be reporting back on their work and recommendations. I can say that some of the areas identified do require immediate attention and others will require a longer term action plan and goals that will take longer to achieve.

There are five central themes that have emerged from this planning process and they are:

- Continuous Quality Improvement and Accreditation.
- Systemic Housing Issues and developing alternative housing options.
- Flexible community participation supports in response to personal preferences and unique needs.
- A Strategic Human Resources Plan with emphasis on recruitment and retention.
- Strengthening Community Relationships.

Now that we have a clear sense of our priorities going into the future, we can dedicate the necessary resources to place special focus on these areas so as to address them. As I have said, some of these areas will not be tackled overnight; however, as we begin to work on them we will see progress over time.

### Question:

Where do you see Plainfield Community Homes in 3 to 5 years?

### Response:

We are a progressive organization with a dedicated staff and a mission that speaks of providing "...quality supports to people with intellectual disabilities and to facilitate their full inclusion in community life. We are also mandated to educate the larger community and to advocate wherever necessary on behalf of people with intellectual disabilities."

We manage our resources well and invest in our staff so that we can continue to provide high quality supports and services. We recognize the importance of our contribution to our community and likewise, the important contributions community members, volunteers and partner organizations make to Plainfield Community Homes.

In the next 3 to 5 years I see Plainfield Community Homes building on these values and strengths. We will be an accredited organization with a robust, competent and skilled workforce providing high quality supports and services. Our good reputation will be built on what we do and how we respond to and support people with intellectual disabilities and their families. I believe this organization will continue to grow and develop a range of support options and will continue to be seen as a great employer and excellent provider of supports and services.

### Question:

Why do we place so much focus on children,

youth and families? It seems as though many of the new opportunities and initiatives are available primarily to children, youth and families.

### Response:

There may be this perception since we often hear about new initiatives that are geared to children and families. In the past several years we have made a concerted effort to develop a range of supports and services for families based on what we know is desperately needed in the Belleville area. This has included respite services, summer recreation, leisure and camping options, respite for families during the March break, Associate Family matches with children who are placed by the Children's Aid Society and, more recently, the very innovative "Families First" pilot project in collaboration with the Hastings Children's Aid Society and funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

As we begin to know families and develop a relationship with them, they, in turn, trust us to be their provider of choice going into the future. We have the benefit of getting to know the families and children and they get to know this organization, what we believe in, and the supports and services we provide. As the Ministry introduces direct funding, we can be sure that people with intellectual disabilities and families will look to organizations that are prepared to develop supports and services in response to their expressed needs and preferences. This is, after all, our future.

That said, we have a commitment to all people whether it is children, adults or their families. This includes all people we currently support and those people we will support in the future. We will be sure to honour this commitment to them.

I will look forward to meeting with our remaining teams.

Enjoy a safe and healthy summer!

## FOCUS ON FUN AND FRIENDSHIP

Sandra Boulter  
- Personal Outcomes Worker, Recreation/Leisure

We are looking forward to working in our gardens! This year we will focus on our new raised garden plots. We hope that our new gardens will invite more community participation, to assist us in growing vegetables to support the Good Food Box program. We invite you to stop by and share in our enthusiasm to work in our new gardens.

One of the new areas we are exploring through the Recreation/Leisure program is education. After reviewing people's interests, we decided to look at education in terms of providing a relaxed learning experience onsite at 91 Millennium Parkway. We chose to introduce these opportunities to our men's and ladies' groups on Tuesday afternoons. Our hope is to offer specific educational topics to each group and, on occasion, subjects that may be of interest to both.

We have invited guest speakers from various community organizations to come and educate people on the services that they provide. We have had presentations from, among others: the Health Unit, the Canadian Cancer Society, the Hearing Society, Quinte Mental Health and the Canadian Diabetes Association.

This type of education is very important, as it provides respect,

awareness and knowledge to the people we work for, which can then be used for personal benefit and/or to provide insightful information to assist in supporting a family member or friend. Each and every community organization to which people are introduced helps to increase their awareness of the services offered within our community and where they are located, while also providing valuable opportunities for networking.

If you would like to join in on any of our educational opportunities, please call us at 613-962-2625. Space is limited.



Guest speaker Tom McDade, Canadian Diabetes Association

# WE'RE CONNECTING

Sharon Wright - Manager of Community Development and Outreach

When we speak of community, we think of inclusion (where everyone belongs), and being valued in the community is often reflected by "giving back," for example by volunteering or working. We have been able to assist people at Plainfield Community Homes with valued opportunities to work and/or volunteer to help support this focus.



Matt and Sherry Lynn



Glen

Our partnership with the local food bank is one of which we are very proud. This winter has been an ongoing struggle for Gleaners to keep up with the demand for food necessary to support the needs of our community. The suppressed economy locally has increased usage of Gleaners and, even though the food bank is working on many areas to increase food supply, we would like to assist them in reaching their goal.

Plainfield Community Homes supports Gleaners with volunteers, who work twice a week at the warehouse helping to ensure products are packed and organized for shipment to specific pick-up locations in the community. We will also donate to Gleaners the proceeds from our third annual live concert. Even though the concert features free admission, we do select an organization or business that may benefit from the event. We will invite the community to bring a non-perishable food donation to our concert in support of Gleaners and that, in turn, will support this need in the community.

This year's concert will be held on July 17, 2009 during the Waterfront Festival weekend. Performing that night will be a great band called "Jaded." Details will be included on the flyer for the Waterfront Festival, and on our website at [www.plainfield.org](http://www.plainfield.org). Please come out and enjoy an evening of great music and fun!

Another great community partnership that I would like to mention is our partnership with the local soup kitchen. The experience of seeing first hand how this process unfolds is one that I will always carry in my memory. The work that the church members do for our community, in terms of volunteer support, commitment and the organization of various meals, is remarkable. To be a part of this experience in any way provides a person with gratitude and a sense of great value on life. The commitment that Tara, Irma and Bob give to volunteering at the soup kitchen has truly proven to be an asset to the church and their mission. The friendly faces of coworkers and patrons and the value placed upon their work has been very rewarding to each. Tara is a delight to have at the dessert table, and she ensures that everyone has a choice of dessert. Irma assists with serving the main course of the meal and has met many familiar faces while working. Finally, Bob ensures that all of the tables are numbered correctly and also collects the response sheets from each table.

As mentioned in the winter edition of Plain Talk, we were beginning to partner with a couple of public schools to work with us on our seedling projects and I am pleased to say that we have been successful with this undertaking. We have visited two schools and have now begun the first steps to growing the plants. The children at both schools were so excited to be a part of our project. They were very happy to assist us with supporting the Good Food Box program and the produce they grow will finish its germination on site, with support from our Recreation program. Theresa and Bradley are the representatives from our agency along with their support staff. The experience has allowed Theresa and Bradley to answer questions from the children (grades 2/3) not only about the program but also to answer personal questions about their seating systems and their communication styles. The respect modeled by our support teams set the expectation for the children, who would then ask questions directly of Theresa and Bradley. For example, instead of asking us the question, we would ask the student to ask Theresa or Bradley themselves. You could see how happy that made Theresa and Bradley and that their presence was of value was obvious.



Theresa and the students

We continue to move forward with community as our focus and we would welcome the community to connect.

If you could use our support but are unsure how this could unfold, I invite you to give me a call and I would be glad to explore opportunities (613-969-7407, ext. 22).



Some of the volunteers who attended our Volunteer Breakfast

## VOLUNTEERS - PEOPLE HELPING PEOPLE

Sharon Wright - Manager of Community Development and Outreach

As an agency, we have always recognized the value of our volunteers and, as we move forward in our journey toward Accreditation, the value becomes even more apparent. We live in a society that is active in war and economic recession, and many of our volunteers may experience this struggle with us but are still willing to give their valuable time to assist someone whom we support directly or indirectly.

Our volunteer complement has increased due to new strategies of making our volunteer needs known through as many available recruitment tools as possible. We have broadened our volunteer needs at Plainfield Community Homes and have ensured that volunteers are respected throughout the organization.

We continue to recognize our volunteers by offering tokens of appreciation, celebration events and ongoing expressions of thanks. Our membership with Volunteer and Information Quinte allows me to stay current with volunteer events and volunteer strategies that have shown to be successful in our community.

We have once again participated in the event in support of volunteers which is hosted by Volunteer and Information Quinte at the Ramada Inn. We have assisted with the selection of the Ruth Burrows Award and the Maurice Rollins Award for Volunteerism.

Plainfield Community Homes has always placed value on educating the community about the rights of the people we support. I personally believe that "presence" alone can be educating and therefore, participating in the "Youth Challenge" during National Volunteer Week in April seemed a good "fit." Several requests for support for Youth volunteers have been submitted to VIQ in hopes that high school students will volunteer some of their time to us in various areas.

Remember – volunteers have been and continue to be an essential part of who we are.

# A FOCUS ON QUALITY

**Hilary Tugwood - Director of Accreditation & Child, Youth and Family Services**  
**Sandra Coates - Manager of Quality Enhancement**

Plainfield Community Homes has been offering many training and development opportunities to our employees. The success of this training has helped us to meet the commitments and goals identified through our recent Strategic Planning process.

In today's world, employees recognize the importance of keeping their skills current, and so the employees of Plainfield Community Homes have been quite enthusiastic about the training opportunities that have been offered. Plainfield Community Homes is committed to investing in training and the continuous upgrading of our employees' skills.

We recently hosted a workshop entitled "Abuse Awareness" presented by Dawn Whalen of Community Living Campbellford/Brighton. This most informative workshop resulted in very positive feedback from participants.

We have held several refresher courses in Personal Outcome Measures over the last few months, which have helped to identify and clarify the importance of the 21 Personal Outcome Measures, the Personal Outcome Binders and areas of success and celebration.

We have also offered refresher courses in Enhancing the Rights and Responsibilities of the people we support and we will continue to offer refresher courses throughout this year. We are currently developing systemic strategies to be able to offer these courses every couple of years.

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## INSTITUTIONAL LIFE - NOT JUST A BUILDING!

**Chris Semark – Director of Services**

We are very pleased to be celebrating the closure of the last of the institutions for people with intellectual disabilities in Ontario. In recent weeks, candlelight celebrations and other organized events have taken place throughout the province. In May 2009, we at Plainfield Community Homes are celebrating life in the community and the closure of our own Schedule 2 Facility, which has been closed as a residential option since 1992.

Now, in 2009, we see people with intellectual disabilities living and growing with their families and communities, having inclusive learning experiences, earning competitive wages and contributing in valuable ways to their community.

While large buildings of congregate living arrangements and less than optimal care are closed, that does not necessarily mean that all people with intellectual disabilities are automatically going to have full inclusion and community participation. Considerable advancements have been made in the past fifty years; however, there continue to be people living with poverty and disenfranchisement, in smaller but still institution-like living arrangements and continued exclusion. There are still approximately 1600 Canadians with intellectual disabilities living in facilities designed to support over 100 people. The movement to close all institutions across Canada is very strong and one to be supported by us all.

We as agencies and community members need to take responsibility on the front levels to ensure that people we know and who are our neighbours are not isolated or treated as devalued members of society. Living in a house in the community does not mean that people are participating as citizens in the community. Agencies and direct support staff

educate people to know what their rights are and to take control of their own futures by identifying what is important in their lives. We support people to overcome the barriers so that they can meet their goals. But, what is really needed is to remove the barriers altogether so that they do not pose additional challenges for people.

The majority of children with disabilities are now supported to live with their families in a community that is theirs, but the option of participating in their neighborhood schools with the same children with whom they have shared neighbourhood parks, playgrounds, restaurants, etc. remains one of the battles that some parents still face.

On a positive note, we do want to continue to celebrate the remarkable achievements that have been made on behalf of, and with, people with disabilities who are living their lives with respect, dignity and choice. As celebrations are a sign of success, we want to continue to celebrate as more barriers are removed and all people truly are a part of their community.

The Canadian Association for Community Living has released a document called the "National Report Card 2008 on Inclusion of Canadians with Intellectual Disabilities." The purpose of this National Report Card on Inclusion is to provide a mechanism to comment upon and track the progress we are making as a country annually on the attainment of these objectives. It provides a number of indicators in each area that demonstrate both our accomplishments and our ongoing challenges, covering areas from "Establishing Safe and Inclusive Communities" to "Achieving Equality Rights and Recognition." This document can be accessed online at <http://cacl.ca/english/reportcard.asp>.

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## SPOTLIGHT ON TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

**Joan Greenwood – Director of Human Resources**

New, exciting training and development opportunities are being offered through the Ontario College System.

### **D.S.W. Apprenticeship Program**

In co-operation with the Ministry of Training, Loyalist College is now a host site for the new D.S.W. Apprenticeship Program. Some really excellent opportunities are available not only for people in the community to participate in this apprenticeship program, but also for staff members of social service agencies who may be interested in pursuing an additional diploma as a D.S.W. Currently, we have many new employees who have graduated from different disciplines such as S.S.W., E.C.E., C.Y.W. and B.S.T. diploma programs. Employees with these designations can now participate in an advanced program and secure their D.S.W. diploma as a complement to the education that they already have. Courses are offered online and are designed to provide flexible study for people who are currently employed. The cost for participation in these courses through the apprenticeship program is much more cost effective for participants.

Plainfield Community Homes is currently looking at the possibility of participating in the D.S.W. Apprenticeship Program with the Ministry of Training. In the meantime, any current employee who is interested in pursuing an advanced diploma as a D.S.W. should contact me for assistance.

### **Child & Youth Worker Program**

Recently, Sharon Wright and I met with Lorne Thompson, the Co-Ordinator of the C.Y.W. Program to discuss a closer link with Plainfield Community Homes. During our discussions, Mr. Thompson indicated that there are opportunities for current D.S.W., S.S.W., B.S.T. and other diploma program graduates to enter an advanced Child and Youth Worker Program and earn their diploma as a C.Y.W. This is a highly-recognized, three-year program offered at Loyalist College. Many of the courses can be accessed through distance education and virtual classroom experiences. The accelerated program provides for three different placements. If any of our staff are interested in this Accelerated C.Y.W. Program, information is available through Human Resources.

Loyalist College has now secured university transfer agreements with Ryerson University, Laurentian University, the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, Algoma University College, Griffith University and Davenport University. They are currently developing university transfer agreements with several other universities.

All of these learning experiences are being offered right in our own community. They all provide opportunities for career development and growth.

Why not explore what the future might hold for you?

# SO, WHAT ELSE IS NEW?

Patti Gillman - Executive Assistant

## Mark Your Calendars for the 26th Annual Mayors' Challenge Golf Tournament

We anticipate another SOLD OUT Mayors' Challenge Golf Tournament this year! This tournament is our pre-eminent annual fundraising event each year and it will take place on Tuesday, June 2nd at Trillium Wood Golf Course.

## Thank You, Donors!

We sincerely appreciate the donations we receive at Plainfield Community Homes and we would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our donors for their generosity and continued support of Plainfield Community Homes.



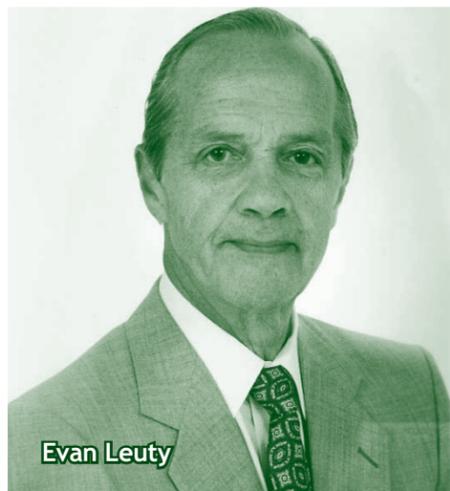
LaurieAnn Campbell, of Molloy's Auto, presents a cheque at Christmas time to Plainfield Community Homes Executive Director John Klassen

In January 2009, the Plainfield Community Homes Board of Governors adopted a "Donor Bill of Rights" which was developed by the Association of Fundraising Professionals, the Association for Healthcare Philanthropy and the Council for Advancement and Support of Education. It has been endorsed by numerous organizations across North America. If you would like to have a copy of the Donor Bill of Rights, please contact Patti Gillman at Plainfield Community Homes (613-969-7407, ext. 30).

## Under Construction - Again...

We are working to update our website at [www.plainfield.org](http://www.plainfield.org) with updated content and a fresh, new look. Like many organizations, we are challenged to maintain a website that is current and relevant in a fast-paced and ever-evolving environment. But, stay tuned – you will soon begin to notice some positive changes. And, if you have any recommendations on content you'd like to see, we'd be happy to hear from you!

## In His Own Words - An Interview with Evan Leuty, Member of the Plainfield Community Homes Board of Governors



Mr. Evan Leuty has been a member of the Board of Governors of Plainfield Community Homes for 40 years, joining in 1969. From 1985 until 1988, Evan served as President of the Board.

### Who \*is\* Evan Leuty?

I am a native Torontonians, who thrives on sporting activities – ie., golf, fishing, hiking, skiing and tennis. I enjoy the interaction with people, and also do some volunteer work when and where needed – ie., as a Board director of our condominium corporation. As well, I am a club committee member for the cause of raising funds for Tennis Canada's youth programs.

### What is your professional background?

My professional/business career spanned 42 years with one of the major producers of ready mixed concrete, concrete block and brick, servicing the construction industry in the GTA and surrounding region. I served as a member of several related associations.

### How did you come to be involved with Plainfield Community Homes?

In February 1969, our son Kevin, age 28 months, was admitted into what was then known as the Ontario Home for Mentally Retarded Infants (OHMRI). This facility was developed and operated through the very generous patronage of Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Velleman. Like others before me, I was asked (aka conscripted?) to join the OHMRI's august Board, which consisted of a dozen or so members. The fee to join the Board was \$100.

### Why did you feel that it was important to get involved with Plainfield Community Homes?

We were so delighted that, at last, Kevin would be able to receive the requisite medical care which we could not provide in our home, given his rather complex medical/physical afflictions. To express our gratitude, I was very keen to offer my services as a member of the Board.

### What, in your opinion, is the role of the Board of Governors of Plainfield Community Homes?

The Board's role is to emphasize outward Vision rather than internal operations – ie., to focus on the intended long term impact on the community outside the agency and to be accountable to the families we support, the Ministry and the general public for conscientious and effective accomplishment of our objectives and obligations. The Board provides the link between the agency and the community at large and provides leadership in advocating for changes in our community, in government legislation and regulation to enhance the welfare, health and social functioning of people served by the agency.

We practice due diligence to function within a decorum of ethical, businesslike and lawful conduct. The Board is expected to represent the interests of our agency and its community as a whole and to make certain contributions that lead Plainfield Community Homes toward desired performances and ensure they occur. The Board clearly delegates authority to the Executive Director and establishes the accountability of the Executive Director to the Board. Finally, the Board reviews and updates the corporation's Bylaws as necessary.

### What are the goals of the Board of Governors?

The goal of the Board of Governors is to effect our statement that all citizens be afforded dignity, live in a community of choice and have the opportunity to participate fully in making personal choices. We are also accountable to our population to enhance the reality of our Mission and Vision statements.

### What have been the biggest challenges to you in performing your board responsibilities?

I consider the greatest challenges to have occurred during the frustrating periods of funding shortfalls of operating dollars. This was the case in the mid-90s – at a time of increased demands for service. And now we are confronted with a shortfall of funds needed to address the capital repair and operating cost issues of the eight homes under Plainfield Non-Profit Housing Corporation. This comes again at a time of needed expansion of service delivery.

### How do you think the Board of Governors as a whole functions?

The Board functions quite successfully. A diversity of perspectives and thoughts is usually the norm. Questions are raised and choices debated. There is plenty of interactive discussion among the members and the Executive Director relative to a variety of subject matters of concern tabled at the meetings. Given time, and respect to individual differences, the matter at hand invariably comes to a resolve the whole Board can support – ie., the Board speaks with one voice.

### What is the one most significant change you have experienced at Plainfield Community Homes in your 31 years with the organization?

The most significant change I have experienced occurred in the mid-80s when the Ministry of Community and Social Services tabled a report entitled "Challenges and Opportunities." That report set out the mandate to agencies such as ours to deinstitutionalize our residential population from the "Facility" in Plainfield and to establish a more friendly and progressive environment of community living for the people we support. Under the auspices of the Plainfield Non-Profit Housing Corporation, our first eight homes were built. More would follow, mostly through purchase or acquisition.

### What excites you about Plainfield Community Homes today?

Since the beginning of my association first with the OHMRI, then as it evolved into Plainfield Children's Home, I was always enthused by the support staff's devotion to the needs of the people we support, at all times within an environment of an abundance of TLC. None of the foregoing has changed since we evolved into Plainfield Community Homes. And, now that we have – through a recent Strategic Planning process – redeveloped and defined our very worthy Mission and Vision statements, I am even more enthused by our direction and the wholehearted dedication by all staff and members of the Board to achieve these goals.

### How do you envision the Plainfield Community Homes of the future?

I believe we can be successful in promoting and enhancing public awareness in the larger community, beyond our own, as to who we are and what we are able to contribute as a community living based organization. That being said, it is conceivable that Plainfield Community Homes will arrive at our organization's Vision: a Community where everyone belongs and all people are valued and respected as participating and contributing members.

## JUST RELEASED!

**Belleville, February 20, 2009** – Prince Edward-Hastings MPP Leona Dombrowsky joined Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) representative, Kay Manderville, today to announce that Plainfield Community Homes has received a two-year \$96,000 grant from the OTF for a collaborative pilot project with the Hastings Children's Aid Society called "Families First." Ms. Dombrowsky and Ms. Manderville offered their congratulations to Plainfield Community Homes and the Hastings Children's Aid Society on this exciting and innovative project.



L to R - Martha Carr, MPP Leona Dombrowsky, Kay Manderville (OTF), John Klassen, Len Kennedy (CAS)