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Providing Care During a COVID-19 Outbreak – Our Experience So Far

On Saturday, August the 8th at 5:33pm, our On-Call Team received a call they won't soon forget. An employee promptly reported that they had tested positive for COVID-19, and therefore persons served at the residential home that they worked at, were possibly exposed to the virus.

One person served in the home eventually contracted the virus. This individual lives with three roommates in the home, and participates in a community inclusion day program that had just started to welcome back participants.

Soon after, we learned that the virus had also been transmitted to some of our team members who also work in the home. Within hours, everyone who may have been exposed to the COVID-19 virus at the home or day service was contacted, and the process of self-isolating and arranging for

testing began.

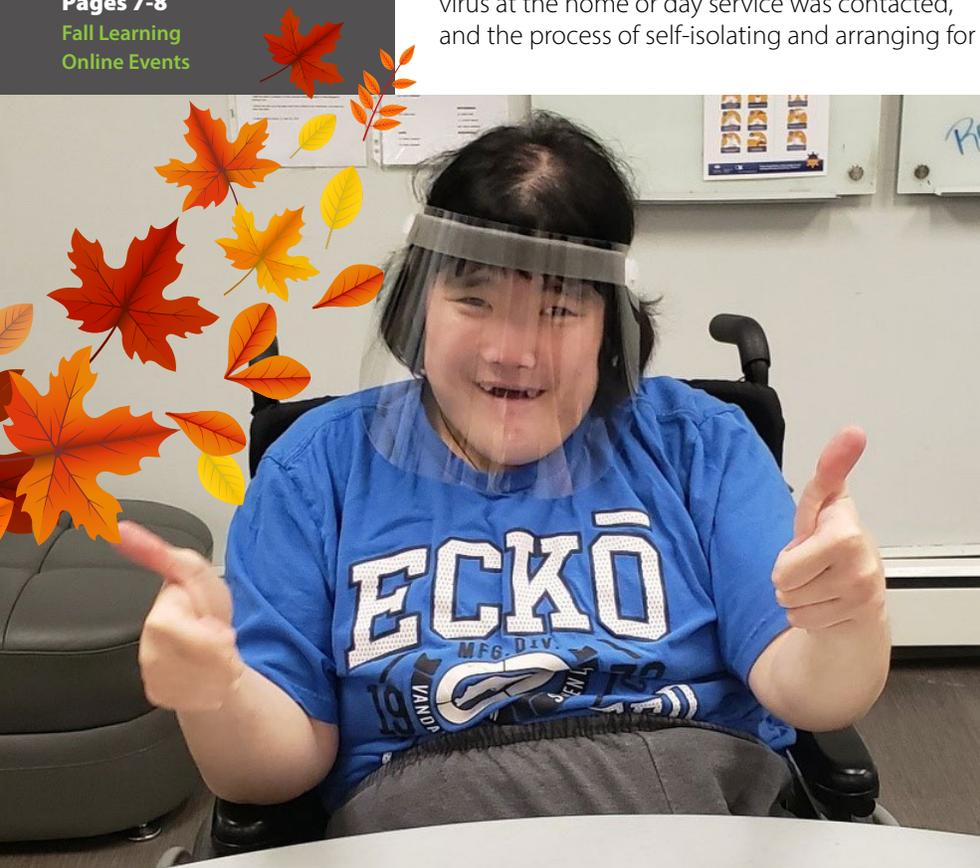
An entire staff team went into isolation, and our Emergency Response team stepped in to provide care in the home. As a precaution, we temporarily closed the Community Inclusion program site to prevent any potential cross contamination.

At this time, we don't know where the transmission occurred. Possibilities include a family visit, a community outing, or an employee working in one of the two programs. In total, three of the four roommates contracted the virus, and a handful of team members did as well. One person who lived on the lower level of the home, did not contract the virus, and none of the other persons who attended the day program did either. Their activities were physically distanced and mostly outdoors. This shows us how important physical distancing and fresh air is when it comes to preventing further spread of the virus. Fortunately, everyone impacted by this outbreak experienced only mild symptoms like fatigue, and some coughing. We are pleased to share that the outbreak was declared over within 14 days.

There was a tremendous amount of work behind the scenes connecting with various government health authorities (Fraser Health COVID-19 Team, the Health Authority, Public Health Nurses, Licensing, WorkSafe BC), our employees' union, the BCGEU and our funder, CLBC during the outbreak. Each of these entities provided the necessary support and direction we needed to implement our Pandemic Response Plan.

We all worked together to manage this outbreak - keeping the troops fed, boosting morale and doing the little things like delivering cooling fans, cold drinks, and prepared meals on those hot summer days.

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Do you have a story for our quarterly newsletter or website?

Email: communications@posAbilities.ca or call (604) 299-4001 ext. 235.



posAbilities.ca

Providing Care During a COVID-19 Outbreak – Our Experience So Far

Continued from Page 1

Our Administration team also made sure that everything in the house ran smoothly. Equipment started to fail at the most inopportune time, as both of their washing machines broke down! One of our Emergency Response Team members, Deborah Doyon, shared that in these situations, “no matter what happens, find the funny in it and you always make it through”.

We deeply appreciate our team members, our Emergency Response Team, and supports from other program and administrative leaders, who are all part of *posAbilities*’ COVID team. When needed, they were there – remaining calm, caring and kind during this challenging time.



Exploring Through Activity Boxes

Contributed by Layla Truong, *posAbilities* Employment Service

The pandemic has affected many people’s lives, but the employment team at *posAbilities* did not let this affect job seekers on their employment journey.

Employment Specialists use various games, exercises or role-plays to engage with job seekers to achieve this. Although the pandemic has changed the way we all interact, physical distancing did not stop the employment team from providing service supports to eager job seekers.

One of the most important pieces during the employment process is Discovery. Within this step, job seekers and their Employment Specialist look at the skills, abilities, interests, and learning styles that each job seeker possesses. This process helps to provide valuable information in order to explore the various employment opportunities that will provide a good fit for both employer and employee.

In a sector where personal development and discovery is so heavily reliant on human connection, we had to think of new ways to interact and engage while being apart from one another. Zoom and phone meetings were resourceful options, but not always beneficial for everyone and we

Limitless Graduation Cohort of 2020

It’s that time again for Limitless to wish its graduating cohort all the best in their future endeavours after completing two years with Limitless.

This year, a small graduation event was held at Robson Park, with all attendees enjoying an opportunity to connect before moving forward to other *posAbilities* services. For those who could not attend in person, they had some great representatives (in the form of caricatures) and Zoom to facilitate online attendance.

With lovely speeches, certificates of completion, a 2 meters physically distant ‘handshake’, and scrapbooks to take home to remember their experiences, it was a fun and successful event.

Congratulations to the four graduates!



wanted to find something that would provide job related activities throughout the week. This meant that we had to find creative ways to assess skills and interests while also being interactive and fun.

Welcome Activity Boxes! These beautiful, fun boxes were hand delivered (physically distanced of course!) and contain eight different activities to be completed over eight weeks. All activities come with materials, step-by-step instructions as well as a guide book to help record the journey. These well thought out activities were designed to be accessible and fun but still related to exploring a job seekers employable skill set.

Some activities include planting tomatoes, a grocery scavenger hunt, baking chocolate chip cookies, and interviewing a friend. You may see cool and exciting activities but Employment Specialists are using their keen eye to seek out skills such as problem solving, time management, hand-eye coordination, and organization.

By creating these boxes, we hope that job seekers can reflect on the activities and their skills, leading to their dream career. But most importantly, we hope that these boxes bring joy during these challenging times.

A Fun-Filled (And Safe) Summer!

Contributed by Amy Chang, Team Leader

Call it what you may – a “Hug Glove”, “Hug Shield”, “Cuddle Curtain” – it is a safe hug, if not a bit ‘plastic’!

It can be challenging to know how and when to open one’s social bubble to give and receive a hug. Completely copied from other people’s genius ideas, a hug screen sits in this backyard, for any time someone stops by and is open for a hug. Who knew that an old baseball pitching stand, a shower curtain, and some tape could be put together for the purposes of hugging. Throw in some old fabric to make ‘hug sleeves’, and you have a pleasant and safe hugging scenario!

In these times where people are reminded to remain physically distant, and to maintain safe practices, we can all find ways to connect with others with an added fun element while doing so.



INCLUSION ART SHOW



Belugas
Ryley Jensen Fisk,
PotteryWorks

My Fashion Show
Tina Parris,
Alternative Creations Studio



posAbilities' INCLUSION Art Show Moves Online

This year, we find ourselves having to re-envision our art show due to the public health orders that impact group size. With the health and well-being of our artists, guests and volunteers being a top priority, as well as doing our part to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, we have cancelled the in-person show and sale at Heritage Hall. Although it's disappointing to cancel the in-person show, we are excited to be moving online this year!

Visit us online during the month of October and purchase art directly through our participating artists.

We look forward to continuing to host a truly unique online show that celebrates creativity, community, and diverse abilities. Celebrate inclusion through the arts with us. Donations are welcome.

**Check out the show at:
www.inclusionartshow.com**



Share Your Experience and Help Us Learn From This Pandemic

Life has been different for all of us. There have been hardships, extraordinary acts of kindness, and many changes—big and small—to our daily lives. None of us have faced a crisis like this before.

In the community living sector, we've been thinking about how we can reflect and learn from this experience. What can we be doing differently right now? How can we be better prepared for future emergencies?

Before we can answer those questions, we have a lot of listening to do.

Our new initiative, Pandemic Learning, is a joint effort of *posAbilities*, BACI, Kinsight, and UNITI. We're asking people across Metro Vancouver to anonymously share their experiences of life during this pandemic. We're particularly interested in hearing from people with developmental disabilities, their families, and people who work with and support them.

Some folks are already speaking up about how COVID-19 has affected them. We've heard self-advocates discuss how they're coping and parents share the challenges they are facing at home. We want to listen to more stories about what people are going through and learn from your experiences.

In a situation as unusual as this, everyone's experience is a little bit different. We all have a story to tell. But with so many changes to our daily lives, it might be difficult to know to begin. We've put together a story-collecting form to help people pick a specific experience.

Here are some of our prompts to help get you thinking:

- Tell us a story about something memorable that happened – good or bad – in the last couple of weeks.
- Think about a choice or a decision you've had to make during the last couple of weeks. What was it and what happened?
- What is something you have done differently because of the pandemic?

Once we've collected a lot of stories, we'll look for patterns and details that point us toward things we can do differently now and in the future. Hearing many different perspectives will help us plan for the future and come out of isolation together.

To learn more about the project and share your experience, visit posabilities.ca/pandemic-learning.

If you have more questions, you can contact *posAbilities*' Story Collector, Emily Hein. Emily can be reached by email (emily@buildingcaringcommunities.ca) or 778-706-3254.

An Unexpected Path

Contributed by
ROOTS

At the beginning of the pandemic, the ROOTS staff team, along with many other staff teams, were

wondering what the path ahead would be in these unprecedented times. We were concerned but fairly optimistic that together we could still make a difference and be of help to others, as well as find a positive lining to the present challenging events. We saw that navigating uncertainty requires teamwork and so we began onto an unexpected path together.

Along with many other staff teams, the ROOTS team members were deployed to assist in residential services, developing new connections with persons served and co-workers. We learned to embrace flexibility and find the positives in each new opportunity to help others – whether it be helping with grocery shopping, delivering PPE and tech equipment to residences, or posting positive messages for our community via paintings and quotes from Dr. Bonnie Henry.

“The thing that lies at the foundation of positive change, the way I see it, is service to a fellow human being.”

– Lee Lacocca.



One particularly strong highlight has been forming connections with **A Loving Spoonful**. Since April, we've been doing bi-weekly pick-ups of frozen entrees and delivering to our folks in need of meal support in our agency. We've been doing this alongside the Supported Living Network (SLN) team...yet another great new connection!

We've been approaching these challenging months with the perspective that we can support our co-workers and persons served through a positive lens and work together to make the load lighter. This path has shown us the importance of supporting each other in even the most difficult of situations.



Telus Expands Internet Program for People with Disabilities

Having access to reliable internet is essential in today's interconnected world. But for people with disabilities, it can still be a struggle. Telus has recently changed their Internet for Good™ program allowing for persons receiving PWD to tap into the program. It provides internet service for \$9.95/m for 24 months and the option to purchase a low cost computer (\$100-\$120) through BC Technology for Learning.

Goodbye Gerry, Welcome Vinita



Our Heartfelt Gratitude and Congratulations to Gerry Fremming on Her Pending Retirement

We would like to take this opportunity to announce that Gerry Fremming will be retiring from her role as Program Director this autumn. As you can imagine, our hearts are filled with gratitude for all that Gerry has contributed to this organization and to our sector, as our movement for equity and inclusion advances.

Gerry has held many roles over the years – she truly does ‘bloom where she is planted.’ Gerry excels at leading teams through transitions, which has assisted our organization, and by extension the community living movement, in continuing its positive momentum and progress towards greater integration. She is also passionate about the arts, wellness, and the innovation of services – interests which help us fulfill our mission of supporting good and full lives for everyone. Please join us in offering Gerry your best wishes and in sharing your memories of time well spent together



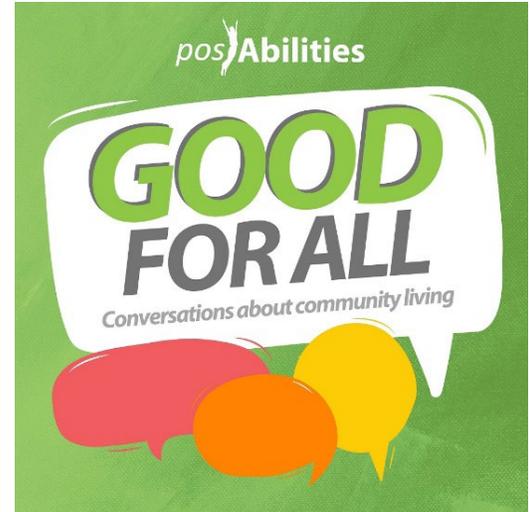
Vinita Prasad to Become posAbilities’ Next Program Director

It is with great pleasure that we announce an internal candidate, Vinita Prasad, was the successful applicant for the position of Program Director. Vinita is a Team Manager who is currently responsible for Laurel Behaviour Support Services and the oversight of Building Caring Communities, Kudoz and Explore.

Vinita has been a professional in the disability sector for over 19 years. Her career started in Alberta, where she worked as a behaviour consultant. In 2007, she joined *posAbilities* as a Residential Services Facilitator, and within six months assumed the role of Team Leader. Vinita was promoted to Team Manager in 2009, and has consistently taken every opportunity to learn and support the innovation team in developing new services such as Building Caring Communities and Explore, and value added components like Kudoz and Real Talk. Vinita holds a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Alberta in Human Ecology, with a specialty in family studies. Vinita’s intimate knowledge of our services, program development, financial management, communications, leadership and family support, will continue to strengthen our organization.

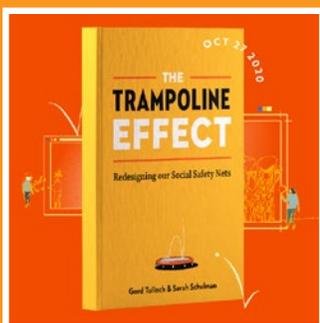
When it comes to our sector and this role, Vinita’s greatest wish is in 2028 – at the end of *posAbilities’* 10 year vision that we all feel we were successful in advancing “Good and Full Lives”. That because of everyone’s amazing work so far and the work that lies ahead, we will have collectively helped shape the future and had a positive impact on the individuals we support, each other and the community.

In Vinita’s spare time, you might see her hiking a local trail, find her listening to the latest podcast, or catch her preparing a gourmet meal. Please join us in welcoming Vinita to her new role!



Introducing “Good for All” Podcast!

After months of hard work, we are excited to be launching *posAbilities’* new podcast, “Good for All”, this September! Hosted by Monique Nelson, our Director of Community Engagement, the show will feature conversations about disability, community, and inclusion. The aim of the podcast is to share stories about what we do, the people we serve, and how we’re working toward our vision of Good and Full Lives for all. Keep an ear out for our first episode, coming September 17, 2020! It dives into our innovation work and what it means to have an “innovation mindset”. You’ll find the show on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and other major podcasting platforms.



“The Trampoline Effect” Coming Soon – October 27

Read the story of what happened after three disability organizations and a design team moved into a social housing complex in the “loneliest” city in Canada. Get your copy on October 27!

Stay tuned and check out: <https://www.trampoline-effect.ca/>



Connecting, Learning and Supporting Each Other in the Age of COVID-19

Thankfully, there have been a couple of positive developments to offset the many challenges we have faced as a community of caregivers during this pandemic. One of them, is the speed at which educational seminars/meetings were transferred to online digital platforms, coupled with our ability to learn how to use them! Another is the government and industry's support in providing suitable technology and affordable internet connectivity for lower income individuals and families, like Telus' Internet for Good™ program.

There is still much work to be done in rural and remote communities, but we are slowly getting there. If you know someone who is offline and needs support, please print and share this newsletter with them, or send me their contact information. While we press for more communications infrastructure and income support, let's collectively promise each other that we will bring along those who struggle to get the information they need to provide a good life for their loved one.

This autumn's line-up of conferences, webinars and family hangouts is nothing short of amazing! Join a family hangout hosted by the [Family Support Institute](#), [PLAN](#), or [Vela](#) (you'll learn more about what each does on the following pages). You can also find out how to effectively advocate for a child with complex care needs through the tools and advocacy experts at [BC Ed Access](#), [Inclusion BC](#) and the Family Support Institute. FSI and Inclusion BC also provide services to advance employment.

If you're thinking about a loved one's personal and financial security and don't know how to qualify for a Registered Disability Savings Plan, or the Disability Tax Credit, speak to someone at

PLAN. Then check out their other webinars on the topics of Representation Agreements, Wills, Estates and Trusts planning, or the development of Personal Support Networks (circles of friends).

Pandemic or not, we all know how challenging transition planning can be. The good news is that post-secondary educational programs have adapted their classrooms, work experiences and practicum requirements so that learners can continue to experience growth through vocational training. Similarly, several service providers are delivering youth transition services, such as IMPACT.

To learn more, visit each organization's website, contact a Navigator to guide you (a free service, housed within the Ministry of Children and Family Development), talk to an Employment Specialist at *posAbilities* Employment Service, or a Parent Consultant at Wayfinders (an initiative of the Family Support Institute). By connecting, youth and caregivers can begin to work through the transition process with experienced mentors at their side (figureatively)!

Learning from a parent who has "been there, done that", has always been the way here in BC. We can certainly be thankful for the many volunteers who gladly give their time, making the paths of others a little easier. We are better together.

Here are a few more quick links for you:

www.CoMakeDo.ca - Fun online learning and entertainment

www.posAbilities.ca/COVID-19 - Information on health, wellness, programs and services

www.LaurelBC.ca - Educational materials and videos (e.g. care kits, tutorial on mask wearing)



FALL LEARNING

Organization / Contact	Upcoming Topics	Notes
<p>Family Support Institute of BC</p> <p>Family to family support – all ages, all abilities, across BC.</p> <p>227 6th Street, New Westminster, BC</p> <p>Mandy Young, Provincial Family Support Coordinator</p> <p>Phone: 604-540-8374 ext. 529 Toll free: 1-800-441-5403 Fax: 604-540-9374</p> <p>Email: myoung@fsibc.com Website: www.familysupportbc.com</p> <p>See the main website for links to other valuable microsites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ MyCommunity BC ✓ Find Support BC ✓ Support Worker Central ✓ MyBooklet BC ✓ Transition Timeline ✓ Wayfinders 	<p>FSI Learning Explorations</p> <p>Typically run weeknights - Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.</p> <p>Fall 2020 Line-Up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Eligibility to CYSN Services ✓ Inclusive Education ✓ Family Hangouts ✓ Inclusive Housing, Inclusive Communities ✓ Social Media Platforms ✓ Effective Advocacy ✓ Microboards ✓ History of Community Living ✓ Representation Agreements ✓ Wills, Estates and Trusts ✓ Creative Housing Options ✓ Siblings Panel ✓ Sexual Health (English and Korean) ✓ Promoting Self-Advocacy with our Kids and much more! <p>Coming soon:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Early Years Transitions - 0-5+ years! 	<p>Suggest a topic!</p> <p>The following are bi-monthly or monthly conversations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Exploring FASD ✓ Families with Nursing Supports ✓ Preventing behaviours ✓ Special Needs and Voluntary Care Agreements ✓ CBD Oil/Medical Cannabis as Alternative Therapies <p>Other topics have included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Trauma informed support ✓ Leaving high school (English and Korean) ✓ Person-Centred Planning <p>Be sure to check back regularly as new topics are added!</p>
<p>Inclusion BC</p> <p>Advancing rights and promoting abilities.</p> <p>Inclusion BC is aligned with the Canadian Association for Community Living.</p> <p>227 6th Street, New Westminster, BC</p> <p>Main Office: 604-777-9100 Email: info@inclusionbc.org</p> <p>Advocacy Line Toll free: 1 (844) 488 4321 Email: advocacy@inclusionbc.org Website: www.inclusionbc.org</p>	<p>A six session, three term learning series will unfold September 2020–December, 2021, in partnership with Uniti and Semiahmoo Self-Advocates.</p> <p>Learn about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Employment ✓ Civic Engagement ✓ Advocacy ✓ K-12 education <p>For details, see https://inclusionbc.org/our-services/virtual-learning-series/</p>	<p>September's learning series focuses on employment topics such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Challenge and Opportunities ✓ Pre-Employment Reflections ✓ Building a Great Resume <p>Also be sure to connect with Inclusion BC advocates if your child is experiencing challenges at school and you need some advocacy advice or support. Another option is the non-profit parent run organization BC Ed Access. Their conference on Inclusive Education runs online September 17-23.</p> <p>See here for more information: https://sites.google.com/bcedaccess.com/advocon2020</p>



Online and at your Service!

Organization / Contact	Upcoming Topics	Notes
<p>Square Peg Society</p> <p>A non-profit, charitable organization supporting Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) adults and their families. Assistance with adults in building self-supporting, independent lives through the sharing of information, skill development and social connections.</p> <p>https://squarepegsociety.ca/</p>	<p>Monthly meetings and events starting in September include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Love in the Time of COVID ✓ Building a Mental Health Toolkit ✓ Confident Conversations 	<p>See the website for resources and more information on upcoming meetings and events.</p> <p>To join the mailing list, contact: joetteheuft@gmail.com.</p>
<p>Vancouver Parents Transition Group</p> <p>An education and support group for parents of youth with disabilities who are transitioning to adulthood. The group meets once per month and features guest speakers who provide information and support to families.</p>	<p>Meetings run October to June, and explore a variety of topics related to planning for a good life after high school.</p> <p>Physical distancing, group size limits and other health protocols will be observed.</p> <p>One to one support is also available.</p>	<p>Everyone is welcome, you don't need to live in Vancouver to participate.</p> <p>Communication via email keeps the group connected and facilitates ongoing information sharing.</p> <p>For more information, email: transitionparents@gmail.com</p>

More resources:

<p>Pacific Autism Family Network</p> <p>A hub in Richmond, BC, with regional spokes, provides a "one stop shop" for services for individuals and families impacted by Autism Spectrum Disorder. Resources, employment programs and social groups are central.</p> <p>To learn more about the services provided, visit:</p> <p>www.pacificautismfamily.com</p> <p>3688 Cessna Drive, Richmond, BC</p> <p>Phone: 604-207-1980</p> <p>Email: info@pacificautismfamily.com</p> <p>For more resources, visit:</p> <p>Autism Society of BC</p> <p>www.AutismBC.ca</p> <p>Autism Community Training</p> <p>www.actcommunity.ca</p>	<p>Down Syndrome Resource Foundation</p> <p>Educational and health opportunities for children and young adults with Down syndrome, including ground-breaking one to one reading and math instruction, speech language therapy, occupational therapy, and a variety of adult education programs which prepare students to live fulfilling lives in the community and workplace.</p> <p>For more information, visit:</p> <p>www.dsrff.org/about-us/about-dsrff/</p> <p>1409 Sperling Avenue, Burnaby, BC</p> <p><i>*Program sites in Abbotsford and Surrey.</i></p> <p>Phone: 604 444 3773</p> <p>Toll-free: 1-888-464-DSRF</p> <p>Email: info@dsrf.org</p>	<p>FamilySmart – In The Know</p> <p>FamilySmart helps make connections between young people, families, caring adults and service providers/professionals to enhance the mental health of children and youth. This is a national organization, with chapters throughout BC.</p> <p>Graeme Partridge-David is the Parent in Residence - Burnaby and New Westminster, who leads parent conversation circles.</p> <p>For more information, call 604-878-3400 or visit www.familysmart.ca</p>
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To stay connected and active online, visit www.CoMakeDo.ca for loads of fun learning experiences and social gatherings.

Also, for current information on temporary pandemic programs and services offered by the governments of Canada and British Columbia, visit www.posAbilities.ca/COVID-19

