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Imagine!

How's Our Flourishing Going?

Contributed by Matthew Rachmat, Special Projects Worker

Our Festival of Flourishing just wrapped up, with smiles and laughter popping up like summer flowers after the rain. This event marked the launch of our new 5-year strategic plan, which will guide us closer to our Vision 2028 of Good and Full Lives, for Everyone.

Through this vision, we aim to support our community to move beyond the fulfillment of basic needs like shelter and food. We are setting out a path to meeting our higher-order needs for things like beauty, love, purpose, and more. This is the stuff of a flourishing life.

So why was the Festival of Flourishing a perfect way to start? Our Director of Innovation, Gord Tulloch, has been researching the components of a flourishing life, and guiding posAbilities' movement in this area. He recently penned the opening piece of the Spring edition of this newsletter, "So, How's Your Flourishing Going?" in which he discusses the beautiful and challenging world we live in - and, how people often get caught up in their daily routines, failing to live life to the fullest. Gord suggests that there is an importance in shifting one's attention, and exploring what it means to live fully and to flourish. Elements like a sense of belonging, self-determination, beauty, purpose, hope, creativity, reflection, learning, laughter, and love all contribute to a full life. Gord co-authored *The Trampoline Effect* with Sarah

Schulman, a plan of action based on a 12-stretches approach to redesign and strengthen our social safety net by assisting organizations to stretch, or pursue strategies that can take them in new directions.

We took a bold step forward on June 20th as we gathered at the Italian Cultural Centre in East Vancouver to celebrate our Festival of Flourishing. Warm welcomes and beautiful music from Manuel Hii greeted guests on their arrival. Symbolically representing a journey, each guest received their Passport to Flourishing to collect stamps at the various activity stations throughout the venue. At each activation, an aspect of flourishing was explored in an artistic, playful, and collaborative way. Each experience encouraging the holder to continue on their journey of connecting, learning, and growing.

The event officially began with CEO Fernando Coelho's opening remarks and Elder, Shane Pointe's traditional territorial welcome on behalf of the Musqueam peoples.



CEO, Fernando Coelho and Elder, Shane Pointe speak at the event.

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

Email: communications@posAbilities.ca or call 778-945-3344.



posAbilities.ca

How's Our Flourishing Going?

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Guests were then invited to participate in 10 activity stations:

| | |
|--|--|
| Flourishing Kitchen with posAbilities | Conversation Café with posAbilities |
| Fun Time Photos with Stage Door | Explore Identity with Alternatives |
| Communal Expressions with Curiko's Artists in Residence | Mini Moments with Curiko |
| Flourishing Tree with Real Talk | Pushing Buttons with Connecting Queer Communities |
| Storytelling Circle with Imagine a Circle | Self-Care with Sam |

When asked about their experience at the festival, guests consistently provided positive remarks and laughter was heard throughout the hall. Some mentioned that they wish there were more events like this and that the stations were helpful in different ways. Barb Goode, author and self-advocate shares: *"The event was so much fun, it was awesome. I was part of the Imagine a Circle Storytelling Workshop. It was so nice to see people mingling with one another and enjoying themselves."*

I heard quite a few say that they were surprised with the number of people that were there – we had over 250 persons served, employees, family members, and volunteers fill up Trattoria Hall! Perhaps most surprising to me, is when I dug a little deeper into the comments. When asked *"Is there anything else that surprised you?"*, responses included, *"I haven't ever viewed flourishing in this way."* or *"I didn't associate the word flourishing with my life experience, or even for others I know here."* Jo-Anne Gauthier, posAbilities Board Director shares: *"Mike and I enjoyed the event, it was definitely different! I haven't been to an event like this before, so it was a nice change to attend something so different."* Overall, our guests were delighted with the activity stations they explored, the fun times had, and what they learned or were left to think more about.

I also asked if there were any stations that challenged their thinking. I heard several opinions but the two that came up the most were the Flourishing Tree and Flourishing Kitchen. Deciding what to write and put on the tree was a challenge. It caused guests to pause and reflect on those higher-order needs, and if they were present enough in their lives. For me, choosing the ingredients for my recipe for flourishing with only 3 pompoms and multiple jars to pick from was hard. My take away is that a flourishing life can be made by a simple recipe – for example, adding in a few ingredients, or it can be much more complicated. It's really based on an individual's needs. As we explore what flourishing together means for posAbilities, I can say that for certain, it will take adding many ingredients to our lives, and/or those of others in our community.

Overall, guests offered the following single-word impressions of their experience: *'fun', 'great'* and wow, it was *'busy'*. All the people I asked said they would like to see more creative events.



Let's take a more in-depth look into the stations, with some pieces written from the station runners:

Mini Moments with Curiko



I spoke with Steph from Curiko about their experience at the Mini Moments with Curiko station. Steph shared that their activation gave the team an opportunity to create "delightful moments" with people they haven't connected with. Steph said, *"our goal was to offer a moment of connection and give a little bit of a taste test for what is on offer at Curiko."*

"We really care about flourishing and hope that it is experienced in little and big moments throughout a person's life. It was not hard to really connect well with the people that were sitting across from us and offer a real and really personal experience – something that offered a gift that they could walk away with."

To create these mini moments, guests were greeted by three hosts when they arrived at the table. Each offered a Curiko mini moment, one that they could choose:

- Calligraphy Blessings with Little Woo
- Post-it Note Portraits with Steph
- Reverse Colouring with Sarah

Guests then walked away with their mini moment gift made from the host that was shaped by the person sitting across from them.

Lastly, Steph shares: *"There were some really meaningful conversations at our table. When talking about strategic visions, one wouldn't imagine this Festival. It was really surprising and exciting to be in the context of something that is usually presented in a very different way."*

Flourishing Kitchen with *posAbilities*

Contributed by the Flourishing Kitchen Team



The *Flourishing Kitchen Activation* was developed to begin to understand how the people of *posAbilities* (employees, individuals served, families) feel about their current state of flourishing. We asked our guests a question along the lines of “*What is filling your cup right now when it comes to flourishing?*” or “*What are some of the key ingredients of your flourishing today?*” They were then given 3 pompoms—1 large, 1 medium, and 1 small—and were invited to put them into mason jars labelled with components of flourishing. Our goal was to make a collective recipe for flourishing, based on what people chose for ingredients that day. We treated the large pompom as 2 teaspoons (10 ml), the medium one as 1 teaspoon (5 ml) and the small one as a dash (1 ml) in order to come up with the following Flourishing Recipe:

| | |
|--------|---|
| 239 ml | Being physically healthy |
| 233 ml | Staying positive (gratitude, hope, forgiveness, etc.) |
| 196 ml | Having fun/leisure |
| 168 ml | My relationships |
| 165 ml | My faith and/or spirituality |
| 148 ml | Being creative |
| 130 ml | Learning and growing |
| 115 ml | Being a good person |
| 107 ml | Finding meaning/having purpose |
| 102 ml | Being close to nature |
| 99 ml | Being satisfied at work |

Our list of ingredients came from different frameworks – ones that we probably don’t consider enough when we think of flourishing for ourselves or for others. How do we increase our store of them? How do we build more cupboard space?

We also asked participants *what else could we be paying attention to* that would bring us closer to flourishing lives. What ingredients were missing from the recipe, and what should we be adding to our grocery list, so that we can become a fully stocked kitchen that nourishes souls?



Explore Identity with Alternatives



When speaking with Christina of Alternative Creations Studio, she shared: “*We wanted to create a workshop that explores who you are on the inside. To visually capture what cannot always be expressed verbally.*” This was their intention since their art studio works with artists with varying disabilities and communication styles.

I asked her about some of the conversations she had while at her station and she said they asked guests: “*How are you feeling?*” and then showed them a template of what different feelings might look like - how calm may look rhythmic and subdued compared to an excited feeling where everything is heightened and loud. She continued by saying, “*we had examples that showed masks as 3D objects where wire and colour come alive and tell a story.*”

We wanted to know about her overall experience at the festival, she shares that “*most people who approached us were excited, anxious and overwhelmed, which resulted in a lot of movement and overlapping of lines and wire. Happiness was also another strong emotion that got shown throughout, sometimes by displaying large smiles and flowers.*”

Lastly, Christina added: “*I wish that our workshop was more inclusive within the space, where we could have approached tables... with kits with everything they needed to create the mask but we didn’t have enough tools/ materials to approach all the tables equally.*”

“We wanted to create a workshop that explores who you are on the inside. To visually capture what cannot always be expressed verbally.”



We look forward to sharing more stories from our Festival in our future publications and on our Art Rise website: www.artrise.ca – stay tuned! You can look for us once again at the *posAbilities Annual Picnic* on August 17th at Central Park in Burnaby. At this event, we hope to engage more folks – see you there!



19th Annual INCLUSION Art Show & Sale

We're back! Our 19th Annual INCLUSION Art Show & Sale is just around the corner and we're excited for you to join us.

- In-person show – October 12 at Heritage Hall, Vancouver
- Online show – Dates TBC

If you are or know of an artist with diverse abilities, join us in spreading the word that registration will open in the Summer and close at the beginning of September. Artists of all ages are encouraged to register their paintings, pottery, photography, art cards, glasswork, jewelry and more!

More information here: www.inclusionartshow.com

Through generous corporate and community support, we are developing our dream of an inclusive arts community. We're thrilled to be partnering with [Open Door Group](http://www.opendoorgroup.ca) as they will be joining us as a sponsor of

INCLUSION 2023! Our goals are to expand artist participation and grow into new communities where we both serve. We are thankful for the opportunity to put on a show of this magnitude every year and deeply appreciate the continued support from our community partners.

About Open Door Group



Open Door Group is BC's largest not-for-profit employment services provider, fostering well-being for all by opening doors to sustainable and meaningful employment. They also host Project

EveryBODY, a campaign that promotes inclusivity in all parts of society including film, art, employment, youth causes, and health and recreation. For more information, visit: www.opendoorgroup.ca

SIXpo: A celebration of sexuality, love, and relationships

Contributed by Sofiya Lim, Communications Specialist

The Sexuality Inclusion and Exploration Festival (SIXpo) is dedicated to inclusivity and exploration of sexuality, love, and relationships. During the three-week event, experts and advocates shared their insights through virtual and in-person events, including panel discussions, workshops, and presentations. The organizers put in an enormous amount of effort to ensure the festival's success.

The programming circle, for example, curated an amazing schedule of workshops and presentations with the help of SIXpo self-advocates. They reached out to all sorts of brilliant presenters, speakers, and educators to encourage them to join in the fun. One of the programming committee members, Emily Seselja, was particularly excited to be involved. As the Team Leader of the Como Lake Community Housing Program, she had a lot of experience bringing people together. But the SIXpo community was something truly special. "It was so inspiring," she said, "to meet all these amazing people who were working to create an open dialogue, safe spaces, and healthy conversations about sexual health and identity. The best part was seeing all the different perspectives and voices come together in one place. And the feedback we got from participants and presenters was amazing. Thanks again SIXpo team!"

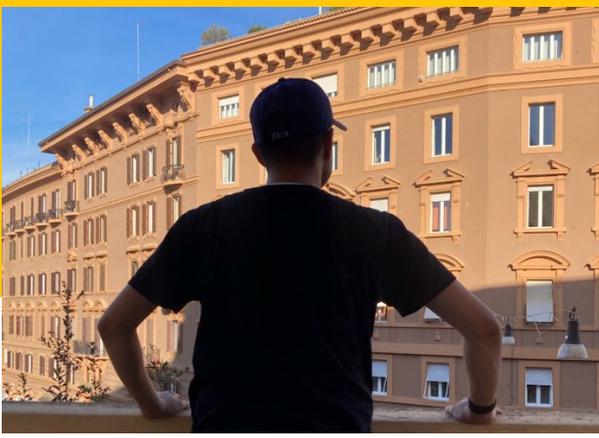
But it wasn't just about the programming. The wellness team did an incredible job creating a space that promoted peace, safety, and intentionality. For a year and a half leading up to the event, the team met monthly to explore wellness practices and share their experiences. This led to the creation of a quiet space, care caddies, a boundaries workshop, a wellness brochure, and even a wellness in sexuality-inspired coloring book! Samantha Gregory, one of the wellness committee members, and a Journey Coordinator at Explore, shared "I personally hope that the spirit of wellness continues beyond the event and that people are inspired to take care of their wellbeing as a life practice! Live long and prosper."



The community showed an outpouring of support for SIXpo, with volunteers working tirelessly to make sandwiches and homemade donuts, while a DJ provided a 50% discount for the nonprofit event. Generous donations poured in from local businesses, including JJ Bean, Starbucks, Bean Around the World, Ollie Quinn, Dairy Queen, Save-On-Foods, COBs and Safeway, and Cineplex. With their help, the festival raised almost \$20,000 worth of donations!

BoBae Kim, the Community Connector from Building Caring Communities, shared how impressed she was with the generosity of the stores and managers. "People tend to shy away from giving monetary donations, but a lot of the stores and managers were generous with product donations, particularly LUSH, donating \$7000 worth of giftsets, within two weeks of requesting! It was amazing, as normally the process would have taken six months or longer, but it had been fast-tracked, specifically for SIXpo! Cineplex was also fantastic. Within minutes of hearing the cause, the manager grabbed three sets of movie tickets and a popcorn voucher to show support. Bed donated two sets of bedding and pillowcases valued at \$500, and Inclusion BC donated \$1000 for the afterparty."

Overall, SIXpo was a testament to the power of community and inclusivity. The festival provided a platform for people to explore and celebrate their sexuality in a safe and welcoming environment. It was truly a festival unlike any other, and we can't wait for the next one!



A Story of Perseverance!

Contributed by Justin

The pandemic was very challenging for me - especially being stuck at home for so long. But I did take the opportunity to find new ways to connect with others. I joined Curiko (then called Co-Make-Do) and ZAPP and continue to be a consistent warm face on these platforms.

When the pandemic slowed, I focused on going to any in-person activity or event that I could. I missed being able to go out and socialize with others. My goal was to take transit independently so that I could continue to make connections and grow as a person.

My parents were a great support to me in achieving this goal. They helped me to be more independent. I took transit by myself as much as I could to build my skills.

When I am planning a new transit route, I take a deep breath, stay calm, and sometimes ask for help with preparing it. Then I look up the location on google maps and follow the directions to take transit. I practiced a lot to get to where I am today. I feel happy, calm, and proud of myself for working so hard.

The next thing I am focusing on now that I can take transit and get around my community is getting a job. My family and Explore are supporting me in achieving this goal. I have also just started working alongside Terry from *posAbilities* Employment Service. I would really love to work at Nat Bailey Stadium, Tim Hortons, or Vancity. Once I have a job, I'll be able to be helpful to my colleagues and save money for a vacation in Spain. I love to travel and hope to one day see the world!

Our Community Neighbours

Meet Vicky Albarracin, a dedicated volunteer who supports the partnership between Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House (MPNH) and *posAbilities*. #Limitless is a program at *posAbilities* that empowers young adults with developmental disabilities by teaching them new skills that enhance their personal growth and independence while creating a sense of belonging.

Every week, these young adults assist with various tasks such as washing tablecloths for community lunches, making crafts for special occasions, and packing food for the Better at Home meals program.

"I love making arts and crafts, so being able to make cards and buttons with the #Limitless youth is such a joy," Vicky says. "It's so nice to see the participants at the lunch appreciate what we make for them."

When asked what she likes most about volunteering with MPNH, Vicky said, *"I feel so much passion to work with these participants and to be a part of this community."* She spoke of the meaningful connections she has made since volunteering and how she enjoys seeing others make connections as well. Giving back to the community and seeing people develop life skills gives her a sense of fulfillment.

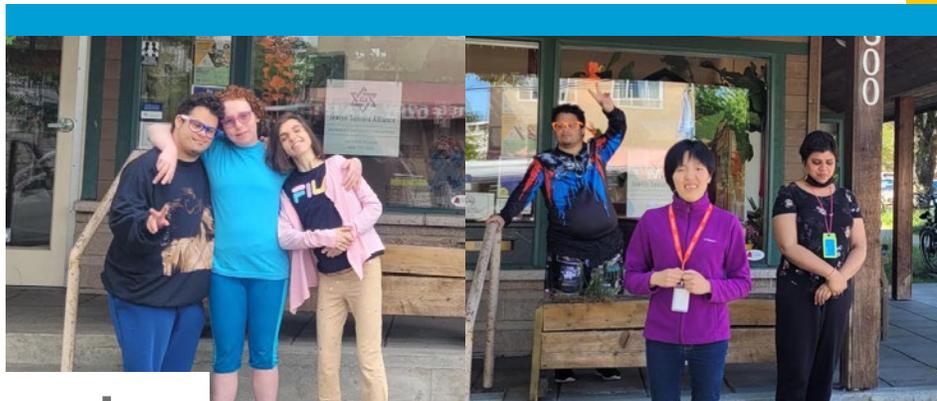
"We want to express our gratitude to Vicky for her generosity and kindness. If you see Vicky and the posAbilities team at the neighbourhood house, please say hello!" – Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House (MPNH).



Regular volunteers, Centaine and Amilie.



Buttons and cards, made by Vicky with the help of persons served, for upcoming seniors' birthdays.



Senior's Lunch – Making a Positive Impact on the Community

Contributed by Sofiya Lim, Communications Specialist

The Can-Do program is an initiative that brings people of all ages together. This program is a wonderful chance for individuals to connect with mentors, collaborate with others, and even find future employment opportunities. Recently, the collective took on a heartwarming challenge - helping with seniors' lunch at the Mount Pleasant Neighborhood House. Every Tuesday, the volunteers worked tirelessly to set up tables and chairs, put out tablecloths, arrange plates and cutlery, and set up the coffee station to serve lunch to the seniors. This act of kindness not only helps provide a warm, nourishing meal to the residents, but also gives them an opportunity to socialize and feel connected to their community.





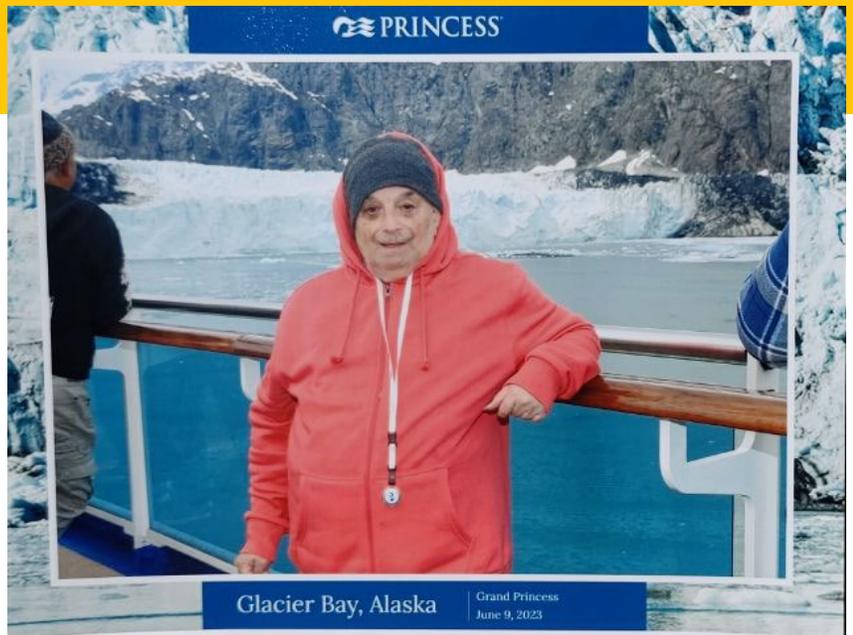
A Trip to Revelstoke Railway Museum

Contributed by Amy Chang, Team Leader, Supported Living Network

How many of us have an interest in and passion for trains? They are fascinating modes of transportation that have been a part of our Canadian heritage since 1836. Robert Misjak shares that passion and knows his historical facts on all kinds of trains. He has been volunteering and working around trains since 2005 and with the Royal Hudson steam locomotive in Squamish and the Roundhouse Train Museum since 2013.

Rob has traveled to visit a number of train museums. In May 2023, he was finally able to visit the Revelstoke Railway Museum, where the history of the Canadian Pacific Railway through the Mountains of Western Canada has been collected and preserved.

Rob has watched many documentaries and information videos on this particular museum and all of its historical accounts on the trains within. He has been saving up for this opportunity and planning this trip for a number of years, and it was with great satisfaction that this wish to see it in person came to fruition!



Glacier Bay, Alaska

Grand Princess
June 9, 2023

Welcome Back from Alaska, Brian

Contributed by Supported Living Network (SLN) Vancouver

Brian Hirschfield recently went on an 11-day cruise to Alaska: enjoying the magic and comedy shows on the cruise, the good weather, and the tasty foods. Being a history buff, Brian's favourite part of the trip was visiting Skagway, Alaska. Skagway is home to gold-rush-era buildings, now preserved as part of the Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park. The town is brimming with gold rush history, unique culture, and amazing opportunities to enjoy the state's renowned natural beauty. Although Brian has been to Alaska before, this was his first time being able to visit Skagway, and he had been looking forward to going for a number of years – it certainly looks like a beautiful city with so much history embedded within.



Congrats Grad!

Contributed by Amy Chang, Team Leader, Supported Living Network (SLN)

Congratulations on your high school graduation Johnathan! We can only imagine how happy you and your family must be feeling right now. This is a major accomplishment and you should be proud of all the hard work and dedication you have put in to reach this point. We welcome Johnathan as the newest addition to the SLN crew!



RSN Choir Turns Nine

Contributed by Richmond Social Network (RSN)

It seems like it was just yesterday when a small group of musical enthusiasts at Richmond Social Network (RSN) came up with the amazing idea to start a choir. The goal was to engage members' musical interests while connecting them to the local community in new and interesting ways.

Over the years, the choir has been thriving and persisting, even through the difficult COVID years (we sang with masks on!). At all times, there is a core group of 10-15 regular members and a rotation of people who join at different times. Our repertoire grew to almost 100 songs, from all musical eras. Members are always eager to try and combine new tunes with old favourites to create an unforgettable musical experience. Members' musical interests are diverse, from rock, country, and pop sounds to classical music, show tunes, and musicals.

The choir's involvement with the community included several outdoor performances at local picnics (Community Fun Fair, Music in the Park), Christmas Caroling, and Christmas performances at senior homes. Our series of monthly Sing-A-Longs at the Pinegrove Place Senior Centre in Richmond has rekindled, starting up again this year. Our members have developed a deep and lasting bond with participating seniors. The residents love singing along with us and are looking forward to our performance every month. The choir is open for community events and recently got invited to perform at the Fraserview Mennonite Church in Richmond. We are planning to work more on this collaboration starting in the Fall.

Looking back, it seems that RSN Choir has been on an exciting journey and hopefully will continue to grow. We are dedicated to evolving and showcasing our musical skills, developing meaningful and organic personal connections, networking with the local community, and most importantly, enjoying the music.

You can see us next at the Richmond Social Network Annual BBQ on Friday, August 11th at Albert Airey Neighbourhood Park in Richmond!



Monthly Art Class at RSN

If you like art, Richmond Social Network (RSN) is pleased to invite you to our monthly art class. Every class is unique. If you never tried window painting or charcoal drawing, this is the right place for you! You will get the opportunity to try different art techniques and create amazing art through painting, drawing, sculpting, applied art, and much more.

The class is open to all interested people. We can't wait for you to join us!

Please RSVP to
lubi.santos@posAbilities.ca
or phone (604)-275-0961
to reserve your spot.



The Sea and ME

Get lost in the wonder and beauty of The Sea and ME - a fun and reflective expression of the artists' personal experiences living near Vancouver's stunning ocean. These talented artists have poured their hearts into their work, channeling memories of ferry rides, playful sea creatures like seals and otters, and even the thrill of spotting a majestic whale. Their breathtaking paintings are inspired by the fascinating life that thrives beneath the waves.

When: Until October 22
Where: Vancouver Maritime Museum (1905 Ogden Ave, Vancouver)
Hours: Tuesday-Sunday (closed Mondays) 10am-5pm
Cost: \$14

Discounts may be granted to folks within *posAbilities*.
 Please email: christina.jackson@posAbilities.ca

About the Studio

Alternative Creations Studio has been enriching the lives of artists, their families, and the broader community since 2013. Nestled in the vibrant community of East Vancouver, the studio serves as a nurturing environment for artists with developmental disabilities to refine their skills and express themselves through their craft. Check out the studio's website at: www.alternativesart.ca.



It Works!

**Contributed by Liane Lowden, Employment Specialist,
Certified First Aid Instructor**

Stop and think. Have you ever taken for granted that your employer offers First Aid training as part of your job? Often that's the case, although we recognize that the course content is a valuable lifeline both in work and our home lives.

posAbilities Employment Service (PES) recognized that the people we serve are often entering the workforce without the knowledge and skills that a certified First Aid course provides.

Courses that meet the required standards of the Canadian Red Cross are currently being offered to individuals connected to PES.

Who knew that those skills and training would be put to the test so quickly...

Matt has a passion to help others. When he learned of the opportunity to take a First Aid course with the support of PES, he was quick to get registered.

After being trained and certified, Matt soon found himself in the position of being a First Aider. Matt shared the following:

"I was out enjoying the nice weather with friends, when I was witness to an accident. My First Aid training kicked in and I recognized this was an emergency. I remembered the 3 C's (Check, Call, Care) and was able to keep the person and myself safe while we waited for EMS (Emergency Medical Services). I was so grateful that I knew what to do!"

We're grateful that you knew what to do too Matt!

World Supported Employment Conference

**Contributed by James Miller, posAbilities
Employment Service**

The posAbilities Employment Service team spent an inspirational three days connecting with colleagues old and new from across the globe at the 2nd World Supported Employment Conference in Vancouver, hosted by the Canadian Association for Supported Employment (CASE).

The event brought together service providers, self-advocates, stakeholders, and many more, to learn, reflect and build on the inclusive employment movement. The team attended workshops and seminars on various topics, including new service models for non-profits, anti-racism, video resumes and more. The team also took part in a panel discussion focused on Career Advancement for people with disabilities – it was an auspicious subject. The very next day, one of the people we support requested our presence during a call with their new Manager. When we joined the meeting, that Manager turned out to be another person we supported over ten years ago! How the world turns, we are privileged to be a part of these stories of success.

Summer Fun

Selkirk, East 38th, East 61st, and Raven Community Housing Programs have been having an absolute blast! They've been up to all sorts of fun and exciting hobbies like bike riding, taking photos, knocking down pins at the bowling alley, solving puzzles, dancing, and cooking up delicious meals. Not to mention taking the time to connect with nature, and spending quality time with their friends and furry companions!





Join us
for our
PICNIC
at the Park!

posAbilities' Annual Picnic

Thursday, August 17th, 2023

11:00am-2:00pm

Central Park, Burnaby

Games, food and fun!



**Interested in
Volunteering?**

Contact Pam Balog at:



778-945-3354



pbalog@posabilities.ca



Bill C-22 Sets the Course Towards Disability Without Poverty

Contributed by **Matthew Rachmat**, Special Projects Worker

It's no secret that some things can take a lot of time and effort to come to fruition. On June 22nd, after tireless advocacy, the Royal Assent of Bill C-22, the Canada Disability Benefit Act, marked a crucial step towards financial stability and support for disabled Canadians.

"It's been a long journey. We are pleased that our Parliamentarians worked hard to get us to this point. People with disabilities now have a glimmer of hope for a better future. A little more money will help them buy food, over-the-counter medication, and maybe even a haircut."

- Rabia Khedr, National Director, Disability Without Poverty

A promising statement for members of communities across Canada and the 1.4 million people with disabilities who are already living in poverty.

This bill represents an important step towards ensuring that everyone, regardless of their circumstances, has the opportunity to flourish and lead a full and fulfilling life.

The Prime Minister's promise of "disability without poverty" has brought individuals and groups together, united in the endeavor to turn this vision into reality. While we are yet to learn about the timeline for the act's implementation, it is important to recognize this milestone and continue to push for progress!

Remembering Kenneth Krammer

Ken Krammer was a lawyer with a special expertise in wills and estates for families with a loved one with a disability. He volunteered his time to speak at several workshops and many families used his services knowing that their loved one with a disability would be top of mind. Ken will be greatly missed by so many in our community.

To learn more about Ken's impactful life, click [here](#).

