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posAbilities
Empowering people with developmental disabilities

Clothes Encounters event creates connections, helps those in need

With files from Axiom News.

Through a collaborative effort called **Clothes Encounters**, posAbilities' Aegis West Program and the New Westminster Salvation Army recently partnered to bring together families of mixed incomes, ensuring 160 community members who needed extra clothes this winter would have them.

The initiative was aimed primarily at bringing together people in the neighbourhood who would likely not meet otherwise in a relaxed social setting. Before the event, neighbours

were encouraged to "de-clutter" their closets by donating extra clothes for those in need.

The clothing was displayed in a market atmosphere at the Salvation Army's location at 325 Sixth Street in New Westminster. Volunteers with Aegis West created and distributed leaflets and collected clothing from people in the area. During the market, they entertained children with face painting and assisted the Salvation Army volunteers with all aspects of running the event.

Both organizations were surprised at just how much a free clothing market was needed in their community. Many parents pulled their children out of school to secure free items. In one case, a father who was not able to afford a pair of new work boots was able to find a pair in his size. To make the lives of families just a little bit easier as we approach the holiday season was an added bonus. The hosts were frequently asked when the next event would be held.

The neighbourhood has families of various incomes and many would likely never have met each other due to socioeconomic factors. Hosting events like this creates an inclusive spirit and is a step towards ensuring a stronger community, says **Amy Chang** of Aegis West. "We were trying to create a venue where people

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

Staff writer/editor: Caitlin Dawson.

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

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Clothes Encounters

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could come and get free clothing but also meet other people in their community, which is why we called (the event) **Clothes Encounters**," Amy says. The event was successful in its mission, she adds.

This was the first time an event of this nature was organized by Aegis West but it won't be the last. Plans are now in the works for a second Clothes Encounters event for spring 2014. "If that is also a success, we would like to turn it into a biannual event every spring and fall," Amy says.

CELEBRATING COMMUNITY LIVING

The 9th Annual Inclusion

ART SHOW

The 9th Annual Inclusion Art Show was a huge success, with over 400 art lovers perusing the works of 168 talented artists from across British Columbia. There was a fantastic variety of pieces on display, from paintings, pottery and photography to glassworks, jewellery and textiles. A warm community atmosphere filled the Heritage Hall in Vancouver, where friendships were forged and meaningful connections made between the artists and members of the community.

We would like to extend our gratitude to the amazing artists, dedicated supporters, tireless volunteers and wonderful people who came along to chat, peruse, and bring home some unique pieces to cherish forever. Here's to next year, which will mark the special celebration of a decade of Inclusion!





Eastside Culture Crawl

Alternative Creations Studio was delighted to participate in the Eastside Culture Crawl, one of Vancouver's signature arts events, which ran from November 15 – 17. Located on Venables Street, in the artists' haven that spans the heart of East Vancouver, Alternative Creations was one of 85 buildings that took part in the crawl, now in its 17th year. "Art changed my life," says Sandra, an artist at the studio,

highlighting the vital importance of community arts initiatives like Alternative Creations. The event offers a valuable opportunity for Alternative's artists to showcase their work and meet their neighbours. While browsing for local treasures, culture crawlers enjoyed hot chocolate provided by the studio, a small act of giving that helped bring artists and art lovers together in a "community of belonging."



Holiday Card Contest Winner

David Cairns, an artist from the Langley Association for Community Living, was the proud winner of this year's Holiday Card Contest with a beautiful painting entitled "Winter Wonderland". Keep an eye out for David's painting, which will be featured in the **posAbilities** electronic holiday greeting card. Congratulations, David!

Our thanks to the event sponsors for their support of the Inclusion Art Show



Victor folds his t-shirt

Contributed by Kelly Berge, *posAbilities* Employment Service

As the facilitator for *posAbilities*' Vancouver Employment Service, I hold employment skills workshops that help ensure the participants' success when they gain employment. I teach a valuable lesson called "Following Directions and Task Completion" where students participate in various hands-on activities and follow step-by-step instructions regarding how to ask for assistance when faced with difficulties at work. This also provides the facilitator with the opportunity to identify each individual's learning style, which aids in the job coaching process with their employment specialist.

One activity I facilitate is called "How to Fold a T-shirt in Two Seconds". Applying the directions can be challenging for anyone, but one individual in particular, **Victor**, struggled with understanding the verbal instructions. I asked him, "Victor, how can you get the help you need to learn how to fold that t-shirt?" and he said, "Ask for help". He was then given verbal and visual support to fold the t-shirt and successfully completed the task! Victor looked at me with excitement in his eyes and stated, "I didn't know how to fold a t-shirt. Now I can fold a t-shirt at home. I know how to fold laundry."

I asked him if he would share the great news with his mom and he responded, "Yes, I'll show mom I know how to fold a t-shirt." He knew this exercise was more than just learning to fold t-shirts – it's about learning to follow directions. So when in doubt, always remember to ASK, LISTEN AND LEARN!



PROGRAM NEWS BEAT



Dan learns to fix computers, while giving back

With files from *Community Matters*, a newsletter produced by the Asset Based Community Development team.

When **Dan's** family computer started acting up, he decided to learn how to fix it. Discovering that he had this interest lead him to research how he could connect with other techies in his community. That's when Dan came across a non-profit called Computers for Schools, an organisation that refurbishes old computers and donates them to schools and other non-profits across BC.

The staff at Computers for Schools were incredibly welcoming and invited Dan to become a volunteer. They got right to work setting up his workstation and showing him the basics of refurbishing computers. These gestures of hospitality made Dan feel welcomed and valued and he now volunteers every Thursday. Dan says it's what he looks forward to the most every week, and "I really love it here. I like the guys and I like learning how to fix computers. It's awesome." To learn the tricks of the trade, Dan was paired up with David. The two instantly formed a friendship. David says he has learned a lot from volunteering with Dan, admiring his strong work ethic and positivity.

It's not just David who appreciates all of Dan's hard work; it's all of the guys in this shop who have commented that they love having Dan on their team.



With the assistance of a community connector, Sunny was introduced to members of his temple and now helps out by preparing roti, a traditional Indian bread.



Harry's Halloween

Contributed by Bahman Khosravi Djam,
New Britton House

Friday, October 25 marked a very important day for **Harry**: it was finally time for the much-anticipated Burnaby Association for Community Inclusion (BACI) Halloween Costume Party! As the evening staff arrived to help Harry prepare his costume, he was already unrecognizable in his long-time favourite black skeleton outfit and silver face mask.

He carried with him his faithful Halloween companion: the spooky hand stick puppet. To ensure his skeleton costume was authentic and believable, Harry was very focused on ensuring all the details were present and correct. The transformation was impressive; he stayed in true skeleton character, right down to not removing his mask at any cost!

When we arrived at the Centre, we watched the guests appear in a variety of costumes—from the cute, huggable panda bear to the spine-chilling Dracula. Fascinating Scandinavian displays stood at the front of the hall's entrance, covered with Halloween decorations. We spotted a huge historical fireplace covered with spider webs and creepy giant insects and an authentic 'spooky mansion' piano that begged us to take pictures.

When the beat of the music started to pump, Harry was excited to move over to the dance floor. It wasn't long before a cute white angel with wings came over and asked him to dance, and he welcomed the offer! Harry also became fast friends with a daddy Dracula and his two action hero kids and they all hit the dance floor to groove to the music. The DJ spun a variety of great tunes—from the 'oldies' to pop and traditional Halloween anthems—which appealed to all age groups. Harry was particularly enthusiastic about participating in the costume contest alongside his new friends.

A special thanks to BACI for maintaining and planning this highly-anticipated annual Halloween event. It was a night of fun for persons served as well as family and staff!



Theatre in the community

Contributed by the Stage Door players

Stage Door Theatre Troupe successfully collaborated with Burnaby Association for Community Inclusion (BACI) to provide an inclusive daytime theatre program at Bonsor Recreation Centre in Burnaby. The collaboration came about when **Brian** from BACI attended the troupe's production of *Tiki Island*. Impressed by the quality of the show and the strength of the performances, Brian connected with **Don House**, an old friend, about the potential for a partnership opportunity. The resulting class was lead by Don and **Jake Anthony**, a working actor also known as Spotlight Jake, **posAbilities'** Theatre and Arts Correspondent, who took turns teaching and introducing the class to theatre games in a fun environment. Actors from Stage Door were delighted to help demonstrate the improv games each week and happily offered mentorship to the students.

The Stage Door Players also create video productions. The troupe recently released two Public Service Announcements titled 'Names' and 'Driving.' See them here www.youtube.com/user/posAbilitiesCA.

Oxford Superheroes join Terry Fox Run

Contributed by Gino Chittattu, Oxford House

A fantastic day was had by all at the Terry Fox Run on September 15. Persons served and staff completed 2.5 km and one member of the team even finished in first place! Go team Oxford House!



REFLECTIONS

Reflections on Community Living

As I reflect upon the year that has gone by, I would like to thank our staff, families and supporters for making a positive difference to the lives of persons served by **posAbilities**. Over and above the day-to-day delivery of quality service, we also embarked on several major initiatives throughout the year.

In October, we concluded an agency wide community engagement planning initiative that is producing new opportunities for persons served to connect with community partners, develop reciprocal relationships and make meaningful contributions in their communities. Feedback has shown that the process has had a positive impact on persons served and staff. As you read our newsletters, you will see more stories about the adventures of the Oxford Superheroes, contributions of Aegis West volunteers and the leadership of the Stage Door players in our communities – to name a few recent successes. We also introduced community connectors to our cadre of services, furthering our commitment to Asset Based Community Development.

One significant area of growth has been in employment services. We are now fulfilling a community need for services geared towards job seekers who are experiencing challenges related to an autism spectrum disorder. We have also grown in our capacity to serve youth through a partnership with CLBC to pilot an employment project in the school district of Maple Ridge. Lastly, we added a second office in Vancouver to house a growing number of employment specialists.

In addition, we were pleased to welcome Kavita Kamat to the role of Clinical Director for Laurel Behaviour Support Services. Our children's services are now fully integrated and offer even more flexible and responsive services to families. Both our behaviour support and employment services have expanded through fee-for-service offerings over the past year, a testament to our ability to respond to the needs of individuals and families.

In 2013 we faced significant funding challenges, yet we continued to innovate, grow and honour the commitments that were made through the collective bargaining process. The accomplishments that we achieved were a collaborative effort and speak to the strength of our people, professional networks and community partners. After 20 years, I continue to be thankful for the contributions of each team member and wish you all the best throughout the holiday season. We have a great deal to celebrate, so let's get started!

Sincerely,



Fernando Coelho, Chief Executive Officer

Meet the Board of Directors for *posAbilities*, 2013-2014

The Board of Directors develops policy and the long term vision for this organization. They are our valued volunteers. We are pleased to introduce: **Celso A. A. Boscariol**, President, **Dr. Sid Mindess**, 1st Vice President, **Paul Girardi**, 2nd Vice President, **Paul van Koll**, Treasurer, **Chris Doerksen**, Secretary, **Dr. Linda Eaves**, **Dr. Helena Ho**, **Anita Lee** and **Lorie Sherritt**.

We would like to extend a special note of thanks to **Mrs. Barbara Stewart**. After more than eight years of service with **posAbilities**, she has decided to retire and enjoy some more time for leisure and travel with her husband Bob and family. We wish the Stewarts all the best!



FAMILIES MATTER

Laurel Behaviour Support Services will offer the group-based Triple P™ Positive Parenting Program in Richmond in January, designed for parents who have concerns about their child's behaviour. Planning is also underway for a Sibshops session and Social Skills Group to run early next year. You can learn more about these programs, and the popular Early Intensive Behaviour Intervention (EIBI), at www.laurelbc.ca.



Community gardening? We're digging it!

Contributed by Caitlin Dawson

Already a flourishing enterprise, *Can You Dig It* has continued to blossom in 2013. On October 29, *Can You Dig It*, **Shifting Growth**, the **Rotary Clubs of Vancouver, Vancouver Quadra, Vancouver Yaletown** and an amazing team of hardy volunteers donned their waterproofs, braced for a rainy and blustery Vancouver day. The goal? To transform a vacant lot on Commercial Drive into an agricultural community hub in a single day. We got soaked, we got muddy, we dug and we hammered and we lifted – but most of all, we laughed. In moments of brief down-time we enjoyed pizza and potluck dishes while a local musical duo played some acoustic numbers. Then we got back to work, every now and again taking scope of the changing landscape, as a drab, unloved lot became filled with beautiful wooden planting boxes and the muddy ground covered with spongy woodchips.

“The Drive” Garden Build marked *Can You Dig It*'s 32nd garden and this ever-growing horticultural family now encompasses 1,300 gardeners, 200 persons with developmental disabilities and 90 newcomers to Canada along with 25 partners. 2013 also saw the development of online resources on the *Can You Dig It* website, including guidebooks on coordinating and growing food and an in-house video series about food gardening for beginners, made in collaboration with Stage Door Theatre Troupe. *Can You Dig It* also continues its fruitful partnership with **Quest Food Exchange**, organizing and collecting food donations from community gardens to offer fresh produce with dignity to those in need. Looking ahead, 2014 holds more exciting developments, including partnerships in Burnaby and Surrey for the creation of new community gardens. To find out more, check out www.cydi.ca and watch the video series at www.youtube.com/user/CanYouDigItProject.



Laurel posAbilities team raises \$975 in walk for autism

The Laurel team sprinkled a little magic as they stepped into Disney for the Annual Vancouver Walk Now for Autism Speaks on September 29. A little rain couldn't stop the smiles of the Laurel team of 12—featuring Cinderella, Princess Jasmine and Snow White—and the many volunteers, who came out to walk, run or stroll their way through Stanley Park. The team raised a grand total of \$975 to support families impacted by autism and work towards making dreams come true.

CONGRATULATIONS

On behalf of our organization, I would like to recognize and thank the following employees for their years of service to **posAbilities**.

Your dedication to persons served, your peers and our stakeholders is much appreciated.

Sincerely,



Fernando Coelho, CEO



Susan Canlapan celebrates 15 years of service (a candle for every year!) with staff of Rosemont House.

20 Years of Service

Ronald Schimpf

15 Years of Service

Susan Canlapan
Tawfiq Sadiq-Zadah
David Stace

5 Years of Service

Krishna Banerjee
Matt Blair
Monique Nelson
Mesfin Tamenne

Specialisterne champions inclusion in Canada

Contributed by Justine Chubb

Recently launched in Canada, Specialisterne is a socially innovative business that aspires to harness the talents of individuals on the autism spectrum. Originally founded in Denmark in 2004, Thorkil Sonne wanted to raise awareness of how these individuals struggled to feel welcome in the labour market. Since then, Specialisterne has turned into an internationally recognized leader with a goal of enabling 1 million jobs globally for those with autism and similar challenges.

To celebrate their official launch in Canada, they held an event in Vancouver on November 5, 2013. Their hope is to enable 10,000 jobs through its related IT consulting business and by actively working with corporations and public agencies throughout Canada. **posAbilities** Employment Service had the pleasure of attending and Employment Specialist, **Seema Tripathi**, shares how it was filled with local professionals looking to hear from Thorkil about his vision for the organization.

Seema had the opportunity to meet and connect with **Carol Simpson**, VP of Western Operations for Specialisterne Canada. After the launch party, Carol even visited our Employment Service office to meet the rest of the team and collaborate on more creative solutions for those struggling to enter the labour market.

Seema expresses her excitement about this new connection as it's a great time for **posAbilities** to be involved. As Specialisterne is a growing global organization, she sees their presence as making a considerable impact on the way people and businesses view individuals with autism and other challenges. Seema further adds that she looks forward to where this could lead and notes the benefits of organizations coming together to "direct people to the right resources for their ultimate success."

For more information, please visit: www.specialisterne.ca.



Congratulations to Amanda Kim, winner of a \$100 Visa Gift Card.

Complete the uSPEQ® Employee Climate Survey

Open now until December 15, 2013.

Let us know what really matters to you at work.

Take a few minutes to share your feedback through this

confidential survey. To thank you for your time, **posAbilities** offers weekly prize draws and one grand prize – an iPad mini – to those who wish to participate. The earlier the survey is completed and draw is entered, the more chances you have to win.

Chimp makes giving easy

Ever found yourself wanting to roll out of bed and into the office? On October 31, staff at the **posAbilities** head office did just that, by wearing their pyjamas to work in aid of the BC Cancer Foundation! Donations were gathered through Chimp, a secure online platform that makes charitable giving quick and easy. Chimp is a place where you can do all kinds of giving online; send money to any charity in Canada, send it to friends to donate or contribute to a group cause like Pyjama Day. Donations made through Chimp can be in any amount and, because it's a registered charity, donations are eligible for a tax receipt. To learn more about Chimp and/or to sign up, please visit www.chimp.net and stay tuned for more initiatives, coming soon! If you have any comments or questions about Chimp, please contact us at info@posabilities.ca.