

# In Touch

COMMUNITY LIVING UPPER OTTAWA VALLEY



*Fifty years of... People living their community dreams*

## Community Living's golden year has begun!

A fiftieth anniversary is always something to celebrate, and Community Living Upper Ottawa Valley wants everyone in the area to share in the festivities to mark their special milestone.

"We're not just celebrating 50 years, we're celebrating 50 years of progress," points out Dave Marcus, past-president of the Community Living Board of Directors and chair of the anniversary committee.

The organization has come a long way since that first impressive step was taken back in 1958. It all began when the Civitan Club invited interested people to attend a meeting and share ideas. When a dozen people showed up, they knew they were tapping into a community need.

The services began with a program for school-aged children that operated out of the Legion hall for the first couple of years.

From that humble beginning involving nine local children, the concept has grown

to support approximately 150 people with intellectual disabilities in all aspects of their life in our community.

The work that has been done over the years will be commemorated in a historical book that will be published in May.

The difference Community Living Upper Ottawa Valley has made in so many lives is also recorded in the smiles

and activities captured in a pictorial calendar that is available for purchase at the main office.

Joining together to encourage and celebrate achievement is what Community Living is all about.

Please join Community Living Upper Ottawa Valley in as many of our golden anniversary events as possible!

Mark your calendars now for our first anniversary event of the year—a community skating party on **February 10 at the PMC**. Anyone interested in helping at this event is encouraged to call Carol Ripley at the Community Living office—613-735-0659. Everyone is encouraged to come out for a skate.

Our full calendar of events is on page 4 of this newsletter.



**Speakers' Bureau members Jeff Shand, Meghan Ripley and Nancy Druve speak with anniversary committee member Ivan Morphy and President Gerry Mansveld after a successful media event held on January 15 to kick off Community Living's fiftieth anniversary.**

# Irene Demers is enjoying the pleasures of home

After 27 years in the Rideau Regional Centre, Irene Demers discovered this year what it is like to celebrate Christmas in your own home.

For the past 11 months, Irene has shared a house in Petawawa with Claude Lavergne and Robert Willson, two gentlemen who are also supported by Community Living.

When it came time to decorate their home for the holidays, Irene knew exactly

what she wanted. In addition to the full-sized Christmas tree in the living room, she proudly showed visitors her own, smaller tree perched on the vanity in her bathroom.

Irene giggled as guests marveled at the cheery decoration.

It was just one sign of the happiness she's experienced since moving home.

"I'm so glad," says her mother, Shirley Demers of Pembroke. "I can't ask for a better place than this or better care."

Shirley pays special tribute to Paul Melcher, Kathy Bennett and the staff of Community Living Upper Ottawa Valley. She says they have worked hard to build a true home for Irene and her roommates, and to help them identify and pursue their personal goals—whether that's playing basketball in the backyard or cooking supper on the barbeque.

"I like living here," Irene says with a sincere smile.

As she speaks, family and friends are sharing treats around her dining room table. Each of the occupants of the Steffan Street home hosted an open house in December. The goal was to meet other people who live in the neighbourhood, and to extend some hospitality to the people they know.

Irene ran to the door to greet her friends, anxiously looking for the cards she hoped they brought with them. It was one of many social highlights she now enjoys.

The regular schedule includes attendance at Our Lady of Sorrows Church in Petawawa, shopping at Walmart and Moncion's Grocers, banking at the TD Bank, and taking time to enjoy a treat at Tim Horton's. During the summer months, she and her mother make a point of meeting on a weekly basis at the Pembroke Farmers' Market.

"She's adjusting beautifully," Shirley notes. "She's improved a lot, and she's more happy."

As she looks around, the mother asks who wouldn't be happy in such a home – the cheery yellow exterior sets the mood, and the interior is spacious, clean and bright. A large deck and backyard provide a calming natural setting.

"I wouldn't mind moving here myself," Shirley chuckles.

On a more serious note, she explains that Irene's move back to the area has provided her and her husband, Don, with a new peace of mind.

"I was worried, wondering where she was going to end up," Shirley admits. "Now I know that she's settled, and the help is here that she needs."



Irene Demers, right, enjoyed hosting her mom, Shirley, left, and her friends at a get-together in her Petawawa home over the Christmas holidays.



# For Kyle Lamarche, Zellers' rewards program is all in the job

Very few workers could match the employee loyalty of Kyle Lamarche.

"His heart is with Zellers," his father, Terry, says with pride.

And Kyle literally wears his heart on his sleeve. His favourite shirts are Zellers-red and he only accepted the new Lamarche family vehicle when he discovered it was a red and grey van, now affectionately dubbed "the Zellersmobile".

His devotion to his job at the local store goes far beyond the single two-hour shift he works each week.

"He goes into Zellers several times a week to make sure things are going OK," reports Andalene Brennan, the youth transition worker at Community Living Upper Ottawa Valley who helped arrange Kyle's original co-op placement at Zellers.

Kyle, who is not a big fan of computers, also spends increasing amounts of his spare time on-line where

he's discovered the Zellers' website. His self-assigned homework includes studying the prices and the variety of merchandise available in the store.

"He is a very good employee," comments Liane Turcotte, adding, "He's very well-liked by everyone here."

The rewards for Kyle include the regular paycheques that have helped him purchase his own large-screen TV and a new bike.

"He's very proud that he gets a paycheque and a staff discount," says Andalene.

Being part of the team is also an important source of pride for Kyle. At 21, he has experienced a full two decades of challenges that many people would find overwhelming. As a result of his medical conditions, Kyle has only the use of one arm and walks with some difficulty.

Yet his father reports that, no matter what the health challenge may be, Kyle's first priority is to get back to work.

"It's a big deal," Terry comments, noting that Kyle's incredible work ethic extends to other jobs he has held with such local employers as Food Basics, Nangor Resort and his current co-op placement with the janitorial department at the West End Mall.

Kyle is in his final year at Bishop Smith Catholic High School, and Terry reports that he rushes home from school to shower and shave in preparation for his work shifts.

Ask him where he dreams of being after graduation, and Kyle doesn't hesitate.

"Here," he says with a smile as he stands in the middle of the Pembroke Zellers store.

His co-workers have noted his enthusiasm. They share stories about Kyle's participation in their social activities, including the 2007 Christmas party that he insisted on attending without his father's support.

That level of independence is common among the people she supports, says Andalene.

"It's a chance for them to show their abilities and what they can contribute," she says of the job placement program.

By setting out a resume and gaining work experience, the participants also become aware of the wealth of opportunities available to them.

"They can have the same opportunities as anyone else who is graduating," Andalene declares. "They feel respected, needed."

Andalene gets great satisfaction from being able to step back as the participants' independence grows.

"The main thing I see is their confidence level," she says. "It just soars."

Kyle, for example, "would be setting up his own placements and working without a support person if it weren't for his physical limitations.

"He's so determined and so hardworking," Andalene comments, echoing Kyle's dad. "He's an all-round go-getter."



Liane Turcotte and Kyle Lamarche check out the electronics department, which is Kyle's favourite area at Zellers.

# Golden anniversary calendar of events

- **January 15** – Media kick-off with local dignitaries, presentations and cake
- **February 10** – Free public skate at the Pembroke Memorial Centre, 12:10 p.m. to 2 p.m.
- **March** – Accreditation process
- **May – Community Living Month**
  - **May 3** – Dinner and dance at the Germana Club
  - **May 7** – VIP Breakfast
  - **May 30** – Memorial garden event
- **June 19** – Annual general meeting
- **June 28** – Community Toonie Barbeque at the Community Living office
- **August 22** – Annual golf tournament
- **September 20** – Classic car show at Riverside Park, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- **October 22** – Recognition evening
- **November 14** – Annual fall lunch for United Way
- **December 5** – Community wrap-up appreciation tea, 10:30 a.m.

## Director profile – Cindy Visutski

Cindy Visutski is excited about the opportunities the next three years will bring.

When she accepted a three-year term on the board of directors at the 2007 Community Living Upper Ottawa Valley annual meeting, she took on a completely new role.

“I have a lot to learn and lots to take in,” she says of her decision to become a board member for the first time in her life.

“I’ll do the best that I can do,” she vows. “I’ll be in there full force.”

Visutski chose to become involved with Community Living for a number of reasons. Her seven-year-old son has Down’s Syndrome, so she is aware of the realities of special needs.

“I thought this was a great opportunity to be a part of making his future a little bit better,” she explains.

As an employee at KI Pembroke, she is familiar with the Community Living philosophy and the difference the organization’s support can make in individual lives.

KI’s involvement as a corporate partner with Community Living takes a variety of forms, from sponsorship of the annual fund-raising golf tournament to providing numerous work placements. Visutski’s 14-year career there has taken her from the shop floor to her present position in the material data maintenance

department. Through the years, she has worked with many people who are supported by Community Living, and she has been encouraged to learn about the organization and the supports it provides.

“I couldn’t think of a better board to sit on,” she enthuses. “I’d like to educate more people about Community Living—what they’re all about and what they do.”

Visutski says her first experiences with the board have confirmed that the spirit of empowerment runs throughout the organization.

“They’re all great people and I’m just delighted that they asked me to be part of their board,” she says, noting that she is particularly pleased with the active role self-advocates take in all aspects of the agency, including membership on the board of directors.

“That’s true community involvement,” she says. “They’ve come a long way over the years, and it’s great.”

Born and raised in Pembroke, Visutski chose to return to the Upper Ottawa Valley to raise her family.

“I realized how much I missed it,” she comments. “It’s a great place for children to grow up.”



Cindy Visutski

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# In Touch

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