

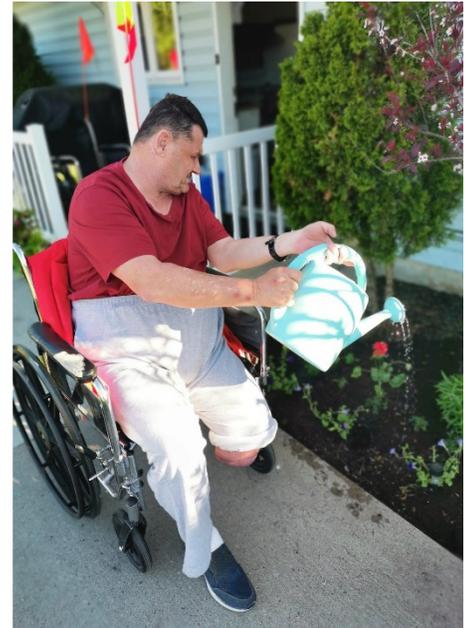
31 Days of Inclusion Stories – 2021

Welcome to Community Living Month! This year our story series is focusing on how a person's living situation can positively impact their quality of life. Our agency has been speaking across Ontario on the benefits of independent and supported living, and these are some of the stories we are sharing!

Day #1 - Retaining Independence After a Medical Emergency

After years of living in his own apartment, Ken Jones experienced a medical emergency that meant a long recovery in hospital. At that time, Community Living had a vacancy at a duplex they owned. This was to be a temporary residence for Ken until he recovered, however, once getting settled and meeting his neighbours, Ken decided it was a place he wanted to stay.

Many things make this independent living option a good one for Ken, and one of which is that he has access to safe sidewalks and is able to get around town to places safely and independently in his wheelchair. Living on his own also allows him a great deal of freedom and privacy, and he can listen to his own music (artists from the 60s), do puzzles and even knitting. Ken has gotten to know his neighbours in the community very well and everyone always keeps an eye out for Ken who gives a friendly wave as they pass by. They also exchange birthday and Christmas cards, making for a close-knit group where everyone looks out for each other.



Day #2 - Building Independence and Being an Essential Worker

In the summer of 1981, Sue Therrien visited ARC Industries several times. A year later, she made the decision to work there and live-in housing offered by Community Living. A few months later, Sue moved into a two-bedroom apartment which she shared with a roommate. Sue lived with a roommate for several years, and in the spring of 1986, she decided to move out on her own and secured her own apartment. She has lived there ever since! Sue receives support once a week to help with groceries, paying bills and other small tasks.

Sue enjoys the privacy of having her own home. She makes her own meals, watches TV shows that she enjoys and has the choice to come and go as she pleases. Even during the pandemic, Sue hasn't stopped living her life. She has kept busy doing crossword puzzles, cleaning her apartment and enjoying walks on nearby nature trails. Sue also works at St. Joseph's as a house cleaner twice a week and is proud to be an essential worker. She looks forward to the lockdown being over so that she can go back to her favorite yoga studio, golf and bocce ball.



Day #3 - Sharing A Life and Building Independence

For Jeff Shand and Gayle Cayen, it was their families who encouraged them to move in together. The two had been dating for a while, and living in their own apartments. They talked it over individually, with their workers and with family before decided to take a look at what sharing a home might be like.



They looked at a few apartments before finally finding one they both really liked. Shortly after, the move was complete! It was within walking distance to a number of amenities that suited their lifestyle, plus they had a backyard.

It has been almost five years that the pair has enjoyed their place together, and when their workers check in with them to see if it still suits, the answer, so far, has been "yes." They still like their apartment and its location and they're comfortable there.

Moving is always a big event in life, and so is moving in with someone. These two have done it well, asking for support when they need it and leaning on each other to make an independent life together.



Day #4 - Building The Life He Envisioned For Himself

A few days after Kirby Adam graduated from high school, he came out for breakfast with his bags packed. He had decided to follow in the footsteps of his brother and move to Ottawa to pursue a career and live on his own. His parents thought they might renovate the basement or build a granny suite for Kirby to live more independently, but that was not what Kirby had envisioned for himself at all. So with the help of Community Living, he moved into his own apartment.

For a few years, Kirby had a few different living experiences, sometimes alone and sometimes with roommates, but it wasn't until his parents purchased a small home that he really found his fit. His supports went from 24 hours to significantly less. He got to know his neighbours and helped out with property maintenance - snowblowing and grass cutting - at his own property and for others. He has developed strong relationships in his neighbourhood. He checks in every evening with a phone call to his parents and Community Living adjusts their supports for him as needed.

Kirby had a vision of what he wanted his life to be like, and that included living independently. With the right supports in place, both in family support and Community Living support, he is living the life he wants.

Day #5 - Embracing Technology to Increase Independence

Alex Walker had been living with his LifeShare family since the latter part of his high school years. LifeShare is often a first-step towards independent living, where a person lives with a host family. At the beginning of 2019, Alex Walker told his LifeShare family and support worker that he would, one day, like to live on his own. With support from all, Alex began his search and secured a temporary apartment in Pembroke. This allowed him to test the waters of living entirely on his own.

During the fall of 2019, Alex moved into a permanent apartment and is still living there today. Staff support Alex with banking, groceries, some meal preparation, a safety plan, daily upkeep of his apartment and other aspects of daily living.



Alex also uses technology for video communication with his neighbors and workers, and also to maintain a calendar with daily reminders and upcoming appointments. He also has a camera at his apartment entrance that is linked to his phone so he has a visual of who is at his door.

Living independently is something that works well for Alex and he looks forward to continuing to grow his ability to do more and more things on his own as he learns new skills and challenges himself to do more things.

Story #6 - A Move To Participate In More Activities

Originally living at her mother's home in Combermere with limited access to transportation, Jackie wanted to live in a community where she could have easy access to participate in more activities. An opportunity emerged in Pembroke where Jackie could have a roommate - Karen Poelzer. Jackie made several trips to Pembroke and talked with Karen and the two decided to give it a go! Karen had been living independently for some time, and Jackie was about to do so for the first time.

Jackie enjoys taking advantage of all the fun things Pembroke has to offer. Prior to COVID, she enjoyed attending Toronto Blue Jays games, getting her hair done, attending aqua-fit classes and watching shows at Festival Hall. The pandemic hasn't lessened Jackie's ability to enjoy connecting with friends. She keeps in touch through Facebook, chats over FaceTime with her iPad, and attends weekly church services virtually from the comfort of her living room.



It was a bit of a leap of faith on Jackie's part to venture out of her hometown and into the "big city" but it has been a decision that has paid off for her and she is enjoying her independence.

Day #7 - The Brother-Sister Bond for Independence

In 2017, my brother, Chad, came to live with me full-time. Our family didn't want to see him living in a group home or other assisted living facility; we know Chad has very deep feelings of belonging and being a part of a family unit. This decision was his choice and some of the factors that weighed into it for him was being close to amenities that he could access on his own.

In our household, Chad takes full responsibility of one of our dogs, walking and feeding her. He is responsible for making his own breakfast and lunches, and joins the family for dinner. He recently started a newspaper delivery job to keep busy during the day. Chad takes his own medications which are prepared weekly, is encouraged to make his own financial decisions and maintains full control of his bank card and bank account.

Chad's independence has had a great outcome in his personal health. He lost more than 60 pounds becoming more active and preparing regular meals. While he is my brother and has travelled with us to the Caribbean, Alberta and other trips, he is also a very independent guy. He recently became a "great uncle" and lights up when he is around his great niece.

What I have learned from Chad and our experience together is that he deserves the same opportunities for inclusion that everyone else gets in life: family and support and guidance, experiences and love. Sure, there have been challenges in finding the right support systems and programs, learning about tax credits and keeping on top of medical care and appointments. And of course, COVID. But I'm grateful for this experience because it contributes to my life as much as it does for Chad.



Day #8 - A True Team Effort to Make a Difference

Ashley Corbett's first experience with living independently was to share a home with three roommates. This was a significant move for Ashley who has autism and, at the time, communicated only through facial expressions, gestures and some sign language. As time went on, there were challenges with the living arrangement and we came to learn that Ashley wanted to live on her own.

When a person communicates in a non-traditional way, it poses a challenge to assist with someone's goal of living independently, and our responsibility of safe and effective support. Ashley really pushed us to create a plan that would improve her quality of life and in July 2018, an apartment became available that was perfect for Ashley's goal to live on her own. It was a group effort between our agency, other professionals and Ashley to make this



transition happen. We are so proud that this collaborative approach has been successful for almost three years!

Today, Ashley also uses a DynaVox (assistive communication technology) to interact with others. Her increased independence has certainly helped her improve communication skills through the use of this technology and to feel more settled in a home where she controls the tidiness and daily routine she prefers.

When we are able to move more freely in the community, Ashley is looking forward to her increased communications skills and applying them at her role at Pet Valu, with her family and around the neighborhood. Community Living has learned so much from working to support Ashley in this truly remarkable story of self-advocacy, with a different kind of voice.

Day #9 - A Priority for Staying Connected

Prior to 2016, Allan was living in two-bedroom apartment. As he aged, he made the decision that transitioning to a retirement residence was the next best option, and he moved into Pembroke Heritage Manor. This move made Allan's life easier in a number of ways, including having someone else in charge of meals. He never has to worry about what to make for dinner! Allan has made several friends at the residence, but very much misses being out and about in Downtown Pembroke - Pembroke Business Improvement Area, chatting with the local business owners whom he met while working at The Prospector for many years.



Allan enjoys sitting outside and continues to take walks during COVID. He feels especially lucky being so close to the Ottawa River, being able to sit outside and watch boaters go by in the summer. There is also Cindy, a dog who also lives at Pembroke Heritage Manor and who greets residents every day. Allan enjoys living at Heritage Manor, and is grateful for the interaction they can have there but very much looks forward to the social activities and the music nights that took place regularly prior to the pandemic.

Day #10 - A True Community Effort to Make a Home

Gord has been connected to Community Living since he was a young adult. He lived at home with his family for most of his life, but as his parents aged, a housing transition was necessary for Gord. The family worked with Community Living on how this would happen but, in the fall of 2019, Gord ended up in the hospital and remained there for nine months. Supporting Gord in the hospital was less than ideal, and then came the pandemic where hospital space was needed for potential COVID patients. A house was in the works, but it wasn't yet completed so Gord's primary Community Living worker, Henry Brodofske, moved with him into a temporary apartment. Two weeks later, Gord had a place to call his own.



Gord's landlord, John Moreau, went over and above to have the house finished and ready to move in almost a month ahead of schedule. It was originally John's intent to sell the house rather than continue landlord responsibilities, but knowing he could make a difference in a partnership with Community Living, he decided to change his plans. When Gord needed a railing on the front step to assist with accessibility, John did the work himself. Gord feels safe, secure and is proud of his home.

Even though Gord moved in the middle of COVID and numerous restrictions, he has spent the past year exploring a variety of new interests such as painting and crafts, guitar, piano, new exercise equipment, gardening and a sensory room. He has had quite the journey to get to this point, and it was a true community effort to make it happen. But we did it - with everyone's help.

Day #11 - Choosing A Life Together & Making It Their Own

Meghan Ripley and Ben Schauer each lived on their own for several years before they were introduced to each other. While they dated, they each continued to live at their own residences. It was important to Meghan that Ben meet her beloved budgies, because it was very important that he liked them too. Ben and the budgies became fast friends!

As their relationship progressed, Ben popped the question and Meghan said "yes!" They decided not to move in together until they were married and that happened in 2017. Their storybook wedding was a dream come true for the bride and groom and there are photos throughout their home to celebrate the day.



As any married couple would, Meghan and Ben enjoy each other's company and divvy up household tasks. Ben does the cooking; Meghan does the laundry and they tag-team on the apartment cleaning. Prior to the pandemic, Meghan and Ben were active gym-goers and enjoyed working out at Planet Fitness. When the gyms were closed, they purchased some gym equipment and now have the option to work out from home together.

This couple is very independent and receive supports three times a week to assist with groceries, laundry and banking.

Day #12 - Exploring A Life with More Independence

Jill Davidson had always lived with her parents. In 2004, as her parents were aging, she wanted to explore living with a roommate. She lived with a friend for several years and then life changes resulted in Jill meeting a new roommate, Karen McLeod. They remain roommates today!

Jill and Karen were two of the first people to move into a new duplex built by Phil Bennett. This partnership with Bennett was part of the outreach initiative that Community Living championed in 2014 to encourage local builders to connect with the agency about housing needs. Bennett's units were accessible, affordable and very comfortable.



Jill took full advantage of her new home (which has a fireplace) and enjoyed decorating it. he has many friends in the area and her mother is also just a short walk away. She has a great relationship with her landlord - one more person in her community who knows her and wants good things for her.

While Jill has regular support, having full autonomy over decisions for her life is important. She manages her own finances with minimal assistance, books medical appointments and pre-COVID, she would walk to visit friends and family at her leisure. Jill is very active and enjoys being outside, doing yoga, going for walks, volunteering and is an active member of Community Living's Speakers Bureau.



Day #13 - Doing What She Wants

Originally from Deep River, Shirley Stewart calls Pembroke her home. She has lived independently for a few years, but it was only recently that she was truly satisfied with what she was looking for in a home. An accessible unit became available at Kinsmen Court and it checked every box on her list! This year, she is looking forward to planting her first garden as there is so much outdoor space.

Shirley is proud of her independence and making her own personal choices is important to her. She receives minimal support for medical appointments, banking, groceries, cooking and general home maintenance. Independent living allows Shirley the opportunity to “do what she wants whenever she wants.”

A huge Blue Jays fan, Shirley has attended a few games over the past few years. Shirley cannot wait for the pandemic to be over so she can visit the Sky Dome ball field in person, and to watch some games with a friend who also lives in the building.

For the future, Shirley’s dream home would be a single-level home with a yard and a craft room in the center of Pembroke. For now, she is enjoying her apartment and the anticipation of a Blue Jays summer!

Day #14 - Reconnecting Roommates

When Andrew Foley decided he wanted to live independently, he ended up connecting with a high school classmate to make it happen!

Andrew reconnected with Mark Dougherty who was living alone in a two-bedroom apartment at the time. Mark was looking for a roommate, someone similar in age and who shared some common interests. After Andrew and Mark talked it over, the newly-formed friends decided to do a trial run. Andrew moved in part-time before eventually moving in full-time.



When an opportunity presented itself to Andrew and Mark to move into a new building, they

were both excited about it. The landlord, Phil Bennett, was able to "build to suit" for Andrew and Mark.

Phil understood that the gentlemen required specific adjustments with a focus on accessibility. He installed a walk-in, accessible shower, accommodated wide doors and large, lowered windows.

While the two have many interests in common, the build also accommodates Mark (a night owl) and Andrew (not a night owl) by having their bedrooms at opposite ends of the unit. This allows each one to follow their individual schedule with less impact to the other. This new move happened during COVID, and while Andrew is now settled in and living in his new home, Mark has decided to move in once the pandemic has ended.

Day #15 - The Story of Roommates: Part 1 of 2

Originally from Almonte, Polly James and her family moved to Pembroke when she was a child. As an adult, she wanted to remain in Pembroke, but she decided it was time to live independently and she moved out of her family's home. Polly lived independently for several years, renting a few different apartments and even having roommates. But Polly had the same experience that many people have - her needs changed over time.

As she began to age, Polly's health began to impact her confidence at being able to live as independently as she was accustomed to and her family recommended that she receive additional support. Living on her own at the time, Polly was also gradually introduced to Lisa, who was looking to increase her independence by moving out of her family home. The two women seemed to click and after many visits, they became friends first, and roommates shortly after.



Polly enjoys cooking, baking and taking care of Lisa like a younger sister. Although Polly now has 24/7 support, she is pretty independent. Once the pandemic is over, Polly is looking forward to returning to her job at Remax Pembroke Realty.

Day #16 - The Story of Roommates: Part 2 of 2

Lisa Teevens is originally from Shawville, Quebec but had been living with her sister in Barry's Bay for many years. Lisa was ready for a change of scenery and wanted to move to Pembroke and expand her independence, but she preferred to live with a roommate. That's where Polly James came into the picture!

Polly had plenty of experience living independently, and after the two met and hit it off, they became roommates. Both women have their own individual interests, but they also truly enjoy each other's company and, over time, found that there were many things they enjoyed doing together. Prior to the pandemic, they attended concerts and shows at



Festival Hall, made a point to have weekly Sunday brunch and entertained friends for Sunday dinner. They were also both volunteers with the Canadian Cancer Society and the Boys and Girls Club.

During COVID, Lisa and Polly are trying to keep active by going for long walks, doing crafts, puzzles and cooking meals. Lisa is hoping to get back to attending courses in school when the pandemic is over.

Day #17 - Choosing Family For Her Best Life

Although she considers herself to be an introvert, when it comes to how she wants to live, Raina Flexhaug prefers to have some people around her.

Raina lived on her own for a little over six years before deciding to move in with a family and be part of a family setting. She enjoys having people to hang out with when she feels like she needs some company and as a back-up for a ride to work when the weather is less than ideal for her usual walk. Within the house, she plays the role of "live-in techie" and also has her own space when she needs it. But the ability to talk with people, share ideas and just be with people is something Raina values in this living space.



"Living with a family gives me the ability to socialize but also the ability to be alone when I choose without even having to leave the house," she says. For me, living with a family was one of the best decisions I could have made. It does not take away from what independence I have worked on and have built but instead, strengthens aspects of that independence where possible and looks for ways to strengthen areas of independence where not immediately possible. I am someone that my friend and her family can turn to when they need someone to watch the house when they are traveling, when they are in need of someone to cover a babysitting job because they have another engagement to go to, they need assistance in getting food on the table or need something picked up while I am out on errands."



Day #18 - A New Builder Collaboration

Andrew Plummer and Kai Laporte came to our information sessions about inclusive housing several years before they started building. When they broke ground on building, they reached out and engaged with us in what would suit our housing needs for individuals looking to live independently. We discussed things such as two entrances/exits, an accessible bath, a washer and dryer option and ramp. They invited us to do a walk-through with them and were open to everything we suggested both inside and outside the units. We quickly secured one unit and most recently secured another unit with them.

Builders who do this for a living can offer more choices for accommodations than we ever could as an agency landlord. That allows us to secure really great housing for people that can grow with them throughout their lives, and gives us a valued local partnership that brings future opportunities for both of us.

Day #19 - A Finding The Right Home To Build A Future

Like many people, Larry Markus had a few roommates before deciding he would prefer to live on his own. His parents helped him look for the right home, and after looking at several options, he finally found one that suited him well. His parents purchased the home and became his landlord. It has been a good relationship - Larry has lived there for the past 18 years. The family plans to sell Larry the house when he turns 65, and he will officially then become a homeowner!



Living independently has provided Larry with the opportunity to focus more on his interests and hobbies which are furthered by his extra space and the freedom to come and go as he pleases. Larry previously took a small engine course and enjoys working on and fixing bicycles and lawnmowers and reselling them. He also rides a red scooter! Larry also enjoys doing yard work, cutting the grass in the summer and snowblowing in the winter.

Larry is good friends with his neighbours and will help them out from time to time with yard work, putting up Christmas lights and decorations, and walking his neighbour's dog. Before the pandemic, Larry was getting together with his neighbours for dinner and BBQs fairly often.

As a special note, Larry is also a regular blood donor and has surpassed 100 blood donations. Larry attended the Canadian Blood Services event in Ottawa where he was honoured and recognized for his blood donation commitment.

Day #20 Trailblazers In Independent Living

Jackie and Robert Denis are celebrating 29 years of marriage next month! Their story is one of our first independent living success stories, in many ways.

Robert was born in Parry Sound and moved to Westmeath in 1990. Jackie was from the area and still living at home with her parents. The pair met in the early 1990s while working at The Prospector in Downtown Pembroke. After connecting at a Christmas Party at the Knights of Columbus, they got to know each other a little better.



After they had dated for some time, Robert asked permission from Jackie's parents for her to move in with him. Her parents supported the relationship and agreed. In 1992, Jackie and Robert were married.

For many years, the couple lived in an upstairs apartment close to their family. But as often happens, their needs changed and things like a lot of stairs became something they found difficult as they aged. In the summer of 2013, they started to think about moving, looking at options available and what new features they might want for a new residence.

A year later, they found a ground-floor apartment in a duplex that worked perfectly. Jackie, Robert and Booboo (their dog), moved in to their new space which included a ramp for Robert's walker, a bath tub with a shower, a "man cave" for Robert and a backyard for their dog. They enjoy their neighbours and neighbourhood and look forward to celebrating many more milestones here.

Day #21 - Finding A New Home, And A New Vacation Spot

Stephen Smith and his roommate had been living on Moffat Street in Pembroke for many years. In 2017, they had to immediately evacuate their home due to the spring flooding, which created a landslide issue and deeming their house unsafe and no longer liveable. Community Living staff had to work quickly to find a new residence for the two men. In the interim, Pine Ridge Park in Petawawa made it possible for them to live in a cottage there.



While they had to move from cottage to cottage due to holiday bookings, the owners were exceptional in making it work. That relationship continued as Stephen and his roommate now enjoy their holidays at Pine Ridge Park every year!

Stephen experienced a lot of heartache about having to leave their home and never go back. It was a part of his life for many years and hundreds of memories were created there. He still talks about it today. But the change has been positive and their new landlord ensured their home was accessible, had a walk-in shower, appropriate lighting and has always been very quick to address any repairs. They are proud of their new home. Both men deal with change differently, and they share their strengths with each other to make transitions easier. It also allows them to find things they have incorporated into their own traditions - take-out Sunday dinners, board games and virtual bingo.

Stephen and his roommate built a strong foundation that allowed them to adapt to changes while continuing to pursue their independence in living.

Day #22: Moving On But Staying Connected

Randy Cameron had lived with his parents until he was 55 years old. That year, he lost both of his parents to cancer. A few days before his father passed away, Randy and his father had a talk about the future and how Randy would be living in a different home. Randy responded with, "I will find my own house, dad."

When the family home sold, Randy moved in with this sister, Lynn and her husband. It was a good time to be connected to family, and they made some great memories. But the move had uprooted Randy from his hometown of Pembroke, and he missed his regular activities there. So, the family sought some help from Community Living to make it possible for Randy to move back to Pembroke.

As luck would have it, Randy's long-time friend, Melvin Mittag, was looking for a roommate. Community Living worked with all parties to find



a home that worked for both men, and that was close to all amenities. Lynn helped furnish the new place with furniture from Randy's family home - pieces of his childhood he could always have with him.

The day Randy moved out was a happy transition towards a place of his own. She knows he is happy in his new home and is well supported by his Community Living workers. Lynn feels her dad got his wish of Randy being in a good home and well taken care of, and thanks Community Living for helping to make that possible.

Day #23: An Independent Life with Roommates and Friendships

Melvin Mittag was raised in Eganville and grew up by the water. When he decided to live independently, he connected with a gentleman who was 15 years his senior and who had been living independently for some time. That match was a good one for many years, but due to lifestyle changes, both he and his former roommate decided that they were ready for a change.

Melvin had known Randy Cameron for quite some time, and they had become good friends over the years. Melvin found out that Randy was looking to live on his own but was searching for a roommate. The two connected and after spending some virtual and backyard time together, realized this might be a good fit. Community Living staff were able to assist and create an opportunity for a change and found a two-bedroom unit for both Melvin and Randy.



He enjoys cutting the grass, doing yard work and keeping his home neat and tidy. He takes pride in his home and the upkeep he does around and outside the house. Melvin has found a new joy for colouring, playing virtual bingo and enjoys spending time outside in the nice weather. Melvin is looking forward to hosting BBQs and going fishing and kayaking this summer. Prior to the pandemic, Melvin was working at Elliott Farm Equipment and is very much looking forward to returning to work once the lockdown is over.



Day #24 - A Partnership That Works For Everyone

Kinsmen Court offers subsidized, partially accessible apartments in Pembroke. John Phannhour was the property manager at Kinsmen Court in Pembroke when a partnership began with Community Living. Their subsidized, partially accessible apartments were a good fit for some of the people we support who were looking for independent living options. Phannhour quickly adopted the idea of being a community builder and encouraged neighbours to get to know one another within the complex.

After he retired, Stephanie Litschgy took over as the property manager and has continued to strengthen our partnership in offering safe and inclusive housing. Stephanie is very involved with the people who live at Kinsmen Court, as she has an office on site and welcomes tenants to come to her at any time. She responds to issues in a timely manner, takes the time to ensure tenants understand explanations related to rent, leasing or general facility questions. They provide a community garden and look forward to again encouraging neighbours to get

together for BBQs and holiday dinners once the COVID restrictions are lifted.

Community Living has been connected to the Kinsmen Court for over 20 years. A partnership like this allowed us to be confident that people are well looked after. Kinsmen Court has the same inclusive community values that continue to enhance our relationship and move us forward with independent housing goals.

Day #25 - A Truly Incredible Story

John Forrest is hearing impaired and uses ASL (American Sign Language) to communicate. He has been connected to Community Living for many years. Eighteen years ago, we connected John to a LifeShare family - Les and Gloria - who happened to be deaf and who also use ASL to communicate. This living situation for John has allowed him to flourish with a family that truly understands his support needs.



The family moved to Nepean, Ontario a few years ago and John moved with them. This living situation has allowed John to flourish with a family that truly understands his support needs. John is very much considered a member of their family, participating in holiday traditions and going on family trips together. John and his family are regularly out and about. They go shopping, attend events and celebrations and enjoy going out for meals (when not in the lockdown.)

John is also supported by the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) and has intervener support him throughout the week. Living closer to Ottawa has given him access to a larger community that understands his communication. While John has moved out of the area, he continues to be supported by Community Living Upper Ottawa Valley through a partnership arrangement.

This story is such a great example of how amazing things can happen when everyone focuses on the bigger picture of how to give someone their best life.

Day #26 - A Committed Volunteer In Her Community

Glenda Dupuis lived with her parents for most of her life. As her parents began to age, some decisions had to be made about Glenda's future, and specifically, where she would live. As an introductory step, Glenda lived with a family who is connected to Community Living's respite program, and when it came time to live permanently out of her family home, she chose to secure an arrangement with her first respite home in Deep River. That relationship lasted 15 years!



As things changed in life, Glenda moved from Deep River to Pembroke and moved in with another family. She has been in Pembroke for the past five years. The move to a larger area gave her the freedom to expand her independence. Prior to the pandemic, Glenda was very involved in the

community. She volunteered with her local church in Deep River and when she relocated to Pembroke, she started volunteering at Our Lady of Lourdes Church every Friday, assisting with the bulletins. She also enjoyed visiting the library.

During the lockdown, Glenda has been keeping busy with puzzles and games, going for walks and enjoying the beautiful weather. She loves looking through books, newspapers and magazines. She also keeps active with her exercise bike and stepper. Glenda is looking forward to returning to bowling on Tuesdays, reconnecting with her community in Deep River and getting back to her responsibilities at church once the lockdown is over.

Day #27 - Planning For The Future

My son, Sam, will be graduating from Bishop Smith Catholic High School this year and we are in full planning mode for the next stage of his adult life. He wants to continue his learning and we're on the search for post-secondary education. There is a supportive community in Renfrew County with individuals who are intent on integration of people with intellectual disabilities. We are hopeful that this search will mean that Sam is able to experience the post-secondary environment like his typical peers.

For many years, Sam has advocated for an independent living arrangement where he can use his skills to prepare meals, complete laundry tasks and entertain his friends. Again, this transition stage is one that we are investigating with the support and guidance of Community Living through webinars and outreach on a mix of options for independent housing. For example, we are learning about Microboards and how they can be instrumental in helping establish continuity and financial stability for adults like Sam who will always need structure and support to be successful in any housing situation.



Currently Sam works at Your Independent Grocer on a part-time basis, employment he was introduced to through Community Living's Bee Successful Program in 2018. Sam loves being a part of his Petawawa community in this role and we're very grateful for the Hyska's commitment to inclusion. There are many local opportunities for Sam's physical and social activities such as cycling, golfing, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, track and field and basketball, to name a few. He's been able to create and maintain many different friendships over the years of participating and he looks forward to the post-pandemic return to regular and weekly routines.

Day #28 - Creating His Own Life (A Mom's Story)

Jamie grew up in Cobden with one sister who has two children who live nearby. He is an uncle who loves those children dearly and he sees them often.

Jamie and his sister went to Cobden District Public School. When Jamie graduated, he chose to go to Fellowes High School in Pembroke. He chose Fellowes because of their theatre arts classes, where he thrived. He was a cast member in three of their school plays and won Student of the Year twice for his school spirit and hard work.

Upon graduation, he had made a clear decision and that was Cobden wasn't big enough for him anymore; he wanted to live independently in Pembroke. With help from Community Living staff and his family, Jamie had set a goal. He quickly gained employment on his own and moved into a bachelor apartment in Pembroke. When his health took a turn, he left his employment and started a long recovery. He started taking long walks, enjoying the library and shopping at Walmart.



This year, his health has returned to normal and he reached a big goal. He has just moved into a one bedroom apartment with a balcony. He has lunch on the balcony on nice days and recently added a rocking chair for the summer.

Jamie is a kind, smart and thoughtful guy and we can't wait to see what life has in store for him. With the support of his family and Community Living, anything is truly possible.

Day #29 Being The Best Version of Himself

Brian Dinwoodie is a well-known local guy! A Special Olympics torch bearer, gold medalist, runner and sport enthusiast, Brian is always on the go. Community Living staff assist with and advocate for Brian to train his hardest and eat clean to fuel his athletic and recreational endeavors, to pursue balance and greatness to be the best version of himself.



Brian moved to Kinsmen Court more than 10 years ago and it is a decision he has never regretted. He always enjoyed living independently, but this subsidized and newly renovated apartment in Pembroke met all of his expectations.

Even with his mask on, Brian rarely goes a day out and about in Pembroke without someone recognizing him for his cheerful and humble personality, and fierce competitive and athletic skills. Brian enjoys spending his time working at Cassidy's where he is a valued employee and a hard worker, as he rarely ever misses a day of work. Brian is also excited that golf courses have reopened so that he can get back on the greens and play in Community Living's 25th annual golf tournament.



Day #30 - Health, Happiness and Humour

For most of his adult life, John has been living independently in an apartment in Pembroke. This independence is supported with Community Living staff who are there to assist as needed. This partnership allows John to appreciate being able to come and go as he pleases while also having the support available as needed.

A few years ago, John had heart surgery. He is managing fine and actually recovered quite quickly. Having the community supports he needs through health services and Community Living has allowed for him to remain in his home.

Prior to the pandemic, John attended church dinners and enjoyed spending his summer holidays at his sister's campsite. He maintains his mobility through daily physiotherapy and exercising regularly. His friends will tell you that he has a sense of humour and a laugh that lights up any room. In fact, he only agreed to share this story if the picture above was going to be used!

Day #31 - Learning The Ropes of Home Ownership

Jennifer and Richard Holohan met on a bus heading to a conference in 2006; they started dating soon after and were engaged by 2007. Richard had lived with his family in Deep River and moved into the apartment Jen already had in Petawawa shortly after their engagement.

They soon moved from a basement unit to a third-floor apartment. However, this move really wasn't working for the couple due to accessibility, noisy neighbours and just not being the right fit. Jen approached her mom regarding a small home for sale and wanted to purchase it. Together, Jen and Richard's families assisted with the purchasing process and they have lived in their Petawawa home since 2009.



Like most of us experience, homeownership has not come without challenges. They have learned a great deal, including how to plan for regular home upgrades by saving for the unknown and being able to count on family.

Jen and Richard Holohan have been individually supported by Community Living Upper Ottawa Valley for more than 20 years and they are celebrating 13 years of marriage this June. They hope to be able to do something special to honor their anniversary. Meanwhile, they continue to love where they live as they are close to everything, part of their community and it is their own.