

## FOCUS ON SENIORS



For most of us growing older means slowing down a little, having less energy and needing a little more down time. It's no different for adults with developmental disabilities.

Trish, Betty Ann and Noreen have been vital members of the Discovery Team for years. They enjoyed being on the go, whether volunteering, swimming or visiting pets at the pound. But recently

they've had trouble keeping up with other team members. So they've moved into the Pathways Seniors' Program. Jo Ann Slater, a facilitator in the program, says the three have truly benefitted from the move, "they are so much more relaxed and less anxious. They really appreciate the quieter atmosphere."

The demographic bulge reaching retirement age includes adults with devel-

opmental disabilities. In fact many of these adults age earlier than the general population, experience a higher rate of dementia, and particularly if they have Down Syndrome, experience a faster progression of the disease.

The Pathways program allows clients the flexibility to be as active as their energy allows. Marlene Luinstra is a facilitator in the Pathways program. "They do not have to participate in every activity every single time. We have one client who periodically will say to us, no today's my day to relax, I'm just going to sit here. We accommodate that by creating the physical space where that's okay for that to happen."

Beyond a physical slowing down the higher incidence of dementia presents challenges. It's not always easy to diagnose dementia in clients. Luinstra, tells the story of Pat who was a Pathways client five years ago.

"When Pat first came into the program we thought she was being stubborn and uncooperative and resistant to change. Not until we had someone with specialized knowledge to educate us that it was changes in the brain that were taking place, did we realize this was not someone being obstinate or developing new behaviors. So that really changed our approach to dealing with the client so now we don't spend

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## Seniors' Program Expansion Project

Along with the rest of the Baby Boomers, there are a large number of people with developmental disabilities entering their senior years. Our Pathways Seniors Program currently accounts for 30% of our clients and, according to a recent Aging Report, this number is expected to reach 50% in the next couple of years. Seniors with developmental

disabilities require additional staff with training for seniors' special needs, furniture designed for more sitting, and customized activities best suited to clients' individual needs.

The good news is, a local private Foundation has offered to donate \$15,000 to support our senior clients if

we can raise an additional \$15,000 in matching funds.

Resources put into the Pathways Seniors' Program for staffing and furniture will provide for clients' needs for many, many years. We will be trying our best over the next several months to raise the matching \$15,000 in donations to expand the program.

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## OUTLOOK

### Thrifty Foods Nutrition Program



Betty and Bill prepare vegetables for a hot meal.

*Food is a big part of life in the Pathways Seniors' Program. Clients can often be found making jam or soup for a hot lunch. Pathways program facilitator Marlene Luinstra explains why food is so important to these seniors.*

A year into starting our jam making program I had eight clients around a table mashing peaches to make peach jam. What came up was a chance for them to reminisce. Most of them come from a generation where the school system did not meet

their needs but what they had were these really fabulous moms and dads who were involved in their lives. So what you'll discover in this particular part of the population is that a lot of the "house arts" are what they're really good at. Each and every one of them knew how to make jam and soups because these were things that their parents took the time to teach them and they would spend time in the family kitchen helping out. To me it's a really lovely

connection for them because they're able to recall things they've done with somebody who loved and cared about them. And they're able to share those memories with the people they're with.

*Many thanks to Thrifty Foods for funding our nutrition program, promoting health and creating smiles.*



"The clients don't always have the vocabulary to articulate what is happening to them."

### Focus on Seniors (continued from page 1)

a lot of time challenging the behavior but redirecting it instead in a gentle, kind way."

It is up to staff to recognize these changes because as Slater acknowledges "the clients don't always have the vocabulary to articulate what is happening to them."

Luinstra says "All the cues are no longer internal for them. Even to go to the washroom the cues now have to come externally. So, in that case, we've found that subtle prompts work better so they can maintain a sense of dignity."

Physical adjustments are also necessary. Luinstra says the environment for clients with dementia must be calm and soothing.

"There is such a thing as too many choices, too much noise, too much clutter and all of these things can really impact quality of life for a client in decline with dementia." GHS has created a special room to meet those needs— we call it the Pearls Room.

The other Pathways Room, "Pals Room", may be a bit noisier but comfort is still a priority. Luinstra says comfortable chairs are especially in demand. "Having chairs that they don't have to bend so much to get in and out of is a huge issue because a lot of our clients have mobility issues." Slater adds "Just like the general population the hips and knees tend to go first and it takes a while to get up and down." Reclin-

ers are particularly important because they afford an opportunity to put the feet up and take a catnap during the day.

Luinstra says despite the challenges the Pathways program is a delight. "Your goal is about making other people's day a good day and I feel so privileged that that is a part of my day to day life."

GHS has managed the increased needs posed by its aging clientele through innovative scheduling and staff adjustments. However, there is now a waiting list of clients for Pathways and that waiting list is expected to grow rapidly. Your support of GHS seniors is appreciated.



Pathways Pearls Room

## Aging and Developmental Disabilities

*In 2009 the Garth Homer Society commissioned a report on providing services to aging adults with developmental disabilities. The report, excerpted here, is available at [www.garthhomer.com](http://www.garthhomer.com)*

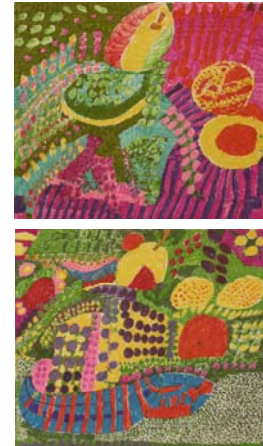
1) The current cohort of older adults with developmental disabilities is the first to live predominantly in community care, is living longer - much longer - than earlier generations, and is part of the baby boom; it's numbers are disproportionately large. In some agencies more than 50% of clients will soon be in later life.

2) As clients age, their needs and interests change, their health and functional

abilities decline, and their care and service requirements change. Increasingly, older clients need more expensive, 1:1 care and programs separate from younger people. In this regard they are no different than other older people. However, the current system of community care for people with developmental disabilities has little or no experience caring for those in later life, is largely unprepared to do so, and is largely unfunded to do so.

3) Similarly, the current geriatric care system has little or no experience caring for those with developmental disabilities and is largely unprepared to do so. In general, for a variety of practical reasons, people with developmental disabilities do not do well in non-disabilities long-term care.

4) The gap between the disabilities care system and the geriatric care system is largely an artifact of their separate but parallel evolution, a product of policy. However, to date there has been little to no policy response from either the health or disabilities sector to the aging of people with developmental disabilities. Because in the general scheme of things the number of older adults with developmental disabilities will always be small, the issue may not soon get the policy attention or funding it deserves. This risk is increased in the current environment of fiscal restraint. In the near to medium term it seems most likely that service providers will need to manage the aging client without significant additional funding.



*New to GHS? The Board of Directors cordially invites you to preview*

### THE BIG PICTURE

*At the Karin Koerner ArtWorks Gallery  
813 Darwin Ave.*

**Wednesday, October 6**  
7—8:30 PM

*Cocktails & Desserts  
Silent Auction*

*Tickets \$20*

**Call 250.475.2270**  
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garthhomersociety.org*

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## COMING UP AT GHS

**SEPTEMBER 10 | 7:00 pm**

### RADICAL REELS

Faster, steeper, higher, deeper – the Banff Mountain Film Festival Radical Reels tour is coming to Victoria.

Catch the steepest and deepest in high-adrenaline outdoor sport films. Hurtle down steep untouched powder, feel the cold spray of stomach-dropping kayak first descents, fly high with the world’s wildest BASE jumpers, and much more in extreme mountain sports.

Tickets \$20 at Mountain Equipment Coop or the Garth Homer Centre.

ALL PROCEEDS BENEFIT GARTH HOMER SOCIETY.

For more information call **250.475.2270**.

**ghomer@garthhomersociety.org**

**SEPTEMBER 15 | 3:00 pm**

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Join us for tea and say hello before the business meeting.

**OCTOBER 5 | 4:30–6 pm**

### DONOR RECOGNITION

The Board of Directors cordially invites you to a

### DONOR RECOGNITION EVENT

at Garth Homer Society  
813 Darwin Ave.

Tuesday, October 5  
4:30–6 PM

### RSVP by October 1

Call 250.475.2270

Email **ghomer@garthhomersociety.org**

I would prefer to receive my newsletter via e-mail

My e-mail address is

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