



2012

# STORIES

of People Helping People



# Partnerships Vital to Success of Community Services



Dr. Virginia Cooke  
President

This has certainly been a banner year for Abbotsford Community Services. The ACS Board is enormously gratified to support this valuable agency as it grows and assumes new responsibilities.

In October, ACS--in partnership with other community agencies--was granted the province's consolidated employment services program for Abbotsford, and in April AbbotsfordWORKS was born. Another landmark achievement was the purchase of a building on Clearbrook Road, housing formerly squeezed programs, and allowing better service to clients in Abbotsford's west end.

The board held its May meeting aboard a bus! We visited ten ACS program sites, met staff and clients, and personally witnessed the important work accomplished at these various locations. We emerged even more enthusiastic about this organization. I loved meeting kids from immigrant families who were at the Multicultural Centre after school, doing homework, playing board games, clearly forming relationships and bridging cultural gaps. Staff often volunteer time after hours to drive children home so they won't have to wait on street corners for buses. This is typical of the amazing ACS staff in many programs, as they help the most vulnerable in our community.

Thank you to volunteers, whose combined 50,464 hours would translate into \$481,614.50!

And thanks to the Board for caring so deeply, and steering ACS on course.

To all the individuals, businesses, churches, schools and service clubs who have donated \$887,508 and the equivalent of \$1.2 million dollars of food and other in-kind gifts, may you be repaid many times over in the satisfaction of knowing you have made your community better.

You are truly among the People Helping People.



Rod Santiago  
Executive Director

Partnerships have enabled us to accomplish our mission of fostering "community well-being and social justice through positive action and leadership" so much more effectively than had we chosen to provide the services on our own.

Case in point, this year ACS has become the lead amongst six partner agencies for delivering employment services to all of Abbotsford. Through the shared expertise of each partner, AbbotsfordWORKS is proving to be one of the most successful and cohesive employment centres in the entire province.

Another initiative that's been in the works is a partnership with School District 34 which provides new space for a broad range of ACS services to be delivered out of the Sweeney Neighborhood Centre. We will work closely with various organizations to deliver accessible programming at this site attached to the new Abbotsford Senior Secondary.

We dream, and plan, and deliver services with so many different community partners. Just a few new examples: UFV's Faculty of Fine Arts and community artists/youth designed and created our ACS Cultural Diversity Statement (parking lot) mural; Abbotsford Police, School District 34, the City of Abbotsford and John Howard Society are partnering with ACS in a new youth crime prevention initiative.

My utmost respect is given to the phenomenal staff and volunteers of ACS who live out genuine partnering on a daily basis. And a heartfelt gratitude to all our community partners. Action-by-action, we will achieve our shared mission.

November 2012 [abbotsfordcommunityservices.com](http://abbotsfordcommunityservices.com)

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# Three Way Partnership

## StandsUp4Youth

In 2009/2010, the leadership at Gateway Community Christian Reformed Church created the 40 Days of Community project. The idea was to encourage and challenge members of the congregation to do things in the community they had not done before, to do things that would stretch them out of their day-to-day comfort zones.

Church member Rita Walker was instrumental in carrying out this initiative and challenged individual Care Groups to determine what community activity they could support and learn more about.

Jessica is a member in Rita's Care Group and as a former student in the New Beginnings Young Parent program, Jessica suggested teaming up with New Beginnings which supports youth in completing their high school education while providing care for their infants and toddlers.

"I know from when I went there that they could really use any extra help they could get. There are lots of young moms at New Beginnings that have been through hell and back and just need to see that someone out there really cares."

The '40 Days of Community' project started in 2010 by Gateway Community Christian Reformed Church has extended for more than 2 years and carries on to this day with the support Thrifty Foods Manager, Michael Bryant seen here with church members Rita Walker, Kelly VanGarderen and Bob Spyksema, who proudly StandUp4Youth by cooking breakfasts for New Beginnings students twice a month.



Left to right: Thrifty Foods Manager Michael Bryant with GCC members Rita Walker, Kelly VanGarderen and Bob Spyksema.

The idea was embraced by the rest of the Care Group and after discussions with New Beginnings staff it was decided that the team would come in to cook a healthy breakfast for the students and their children twice a month.

Rita's husband Milt Walker happened to be seated next to Mike Bryant, Manager of Thrifty Foods at a Rotary Club meeting one morning and this project came up in conversation. As a result, Thrifty Foods agreed to generously supply the food items for those breakfasts.

**"I'm absolutely thrilled with this project and Thrifty Foods involvement," says Rita. "I have been overwhelmed by what New Beginnings does. All the young moms and their children are so well taken care of and it's so encouraging to see that some of the dads are involved too. So many students would have no chance of a bright future without something like New Beginnings."**

"I would encourage other youth (and adults) to support New Beginnings," comments Jessica. "Most of the student moms there didn't mean to have a baby so young. No teenager wants to end their childhood and never be able to do things their friends still can."

"I also think that having more young people around the New Beginnings students that are pregnant or have young kids just might help prevent other youth from becoming pregnant. If more youth saw what these girls are going through I think they would be safer about sex, or maybe not even go there, and see how important it is to get an education. The moms at New Beginnings are trying really hard to graduate but being a teen parent is hard."

"As for adults in the community," adds Jessica, "seeing these girls work so hard for their education, should prove that they are trying to make a good life for themselves. But they need support, and the more POSITIVE support they have, the better off they are."



## Katie

Future Doctor

Eats a Full Balanced  
Breakfast Every Morning

Thanks to the three way partnership between Gateway Community Christian Reformed Church, Thrifty Foods, and New Beginnings at Abbotsford Community Services, students get a good start to their day of classes.

The New Beginnings Young Parent program supports youth in completing their high school education while providing care for their infants and toddlers.

# Paying it *forward* as a mentor

"I wholeheartedly believe in the principle of paying it forward," says Aman.

"I also have a strong cultural connection to my community, and feel that there is a shared view and sense of responsibility amongst the South Asian community to improve the social environment which our youth face today."



Watching Akshay and Aman shoot some hoops, listen to music videos or talk about school, you would probably think they were brothers or at least have known each other for many years. They are that comfortable with each other.

But in fact, Aman is a youth mentor to Akshay and they have been spending time together for only a few short months.

Thirty-two year old Aman is a business owner and for the most part had a very classic childhood. But he gives credit to his parents "who were outstanding in making sure I was raised with strong morals and upstanding citizenship."

"Throughout my early school years, I found it increasingly difficult to maintain a level of innocence that comes with just being a kid. Being different brought instances of prejudice and bullying. I found myself often cornered into situations where I had to react in ways I was unprepared for. Back then there was a lack of programs and outlets for children dealing with these issues. High school presented a whole new world of insecurity and anxiety. Amidst a sea of new faces in an unfamiliar social setting, I quickly looked to friends as role models.

"Spending time with Akshay reminds me of what it was like to be a teenager. Although, it has equally reminded me that much has changed, there are far greater and more complex issues that our youth are facing in our community today. Complications of peer pressure, substance abuse, and violence have plagued our youth and rendered many of them feeling marginalized, silently crying out for support. Akshay has shown me that our youth in this community are a strong and vibrant group. Facing all kinds of adversity, they have developed a level of intelligence that thrives to succeed."

"The development of the South Asian Community Resource Office Youth Mentorship Program is undeniably a positive step forward in this regard. Creating awareness for programs offered through Abbotsford Community Services, and in particular the SACRO Youth Mentorship Program, is a fundamental and indispensable strategy."

"As a volunteer youth mentor," comments Aman, "I hope to see the community respond to the needs of our youth and get involved thoroughly by volunteering their services for the cause. As our youth develop into adulthood, they too will pay it forward. Together, this is how we can make a real difference – one community, one youth at a time."



"I strongly believe that with guidance and the presence of positive role models, an environment in which our youth can truly succeed is something that we as a community can afford to give them."

"It's so easy to talk to him," says 14 year old Akshay. "He's cool and he's helping me to become a better person. It's amazing. I never really knew I was athletic, but when I went to one of his football practices I started to learn things really fast and now he's teaching me about all kinds of sports and I want to play on a team this year."



# What would have happened if there was no help?

Twenty years ago Kelly was a young single mother, and ACS was there to support and 'StandUp4' her and her daughters.



**K**elly was 21 years old when she attended the New Beginnings Young Parent program in 1991. "I had two daughters, Megan who was two and a half years old and Maranda, six months old at the time."

"I received so much great support from the daycare staff, teachers and even fellow students that I gained lots of self confidence and achieved many of my goals. I actually had a good time at school for the first time in my life! I ended up on the honor roll and graduated a year early, after being an 'E' student who was terribly bullied and always hated school previously."

After high school she married the girls' father but it didn't last, and she soon found herself a single mom on Social Assistance, struggling to get by.

"I started going to the Abbotsford Food Bank at different times between 1992 and 1996 to get a little help making ends meet. When my girls were in elementary school, there were two years I remember really well. We were adopted through the Christmas Bureau and both times it was amazing! The generosity brought tears to my eyes especially when a group of teenagers from Mouat School showed up with Aladdin and Jasmine Barbie dolls and other toys, clothes and enough food for a month! The other time it was a family that adopted us and they were so nice! They took us out for dinner in addition to supplying our Christmas and even brought us to their farm to see the baby chicks and jump on their trampoline!

Kelly doesn't know what would have happened to her and the girls if she not received

help from the Food Bank, Christmas Bureau and New Beginnings. "But I know life would have been a lot harder and more depressing."

**"I strongly urge everyone in Abbotsford to support the Food Bank. It helps so many who need it. When times are tough, we all need a hand. And we should all StandUp4Youth. They're the ones who will be taking care of us one day, so we should be giving them all the support and love we can! Who knows what would have happened to my little family if nobody stood up for us."**



Kelly (centre) with Megan and Maranda In November 2011

# bully turns life around

“Without the help of those programs that StandUp4Youth, I probably would have had my son taken away from me, I know I would not have graduated from high school, and I’d probably still be using.”

Bullied as a young girl in elementary school Dainya began looking for friends in all the wrong places. She quit school at around grade nine. She fought everyday with someone ... anyone. “I even started a girl gang and we literally went around looking for trouble.”

And she found it. Between the ages of 15 and 18, during her ‘street stint’ as she calls that period, she had 12 run-ins with the police.

In April 2007 she found out she was pregnant. And then suddenly, on July 1st everything changed. “At nine o’clock in the morning I felt the baby kick. I decided right then and there I had to stop drinking and stop using drugs.”

With the help of her Youth Outreach Worker at the Youth Resource Centre, Dainya enrolled in the New Beginnings Young Parent program and graduated from high school. She attended the Best

for Babies program and learned everything she could to ensure that she and the baby stayed as healthy as possible.

“If it hadn’t been for the Youth Resource Centre at Abbotsford Community Services, I know I would have fallen through the cracks. Because of their help I was able to keep going.”

Now, five years after the birth of her son, she’s a very self-assured, determined and focused 23 year old young adult

Without the help of those programs that StandUp4Youth, I probably would have had my son taken away from me, I know I would not have graduated from high school, and I’d probably still be using.”

In fact, Dainya has since completed a post-secondary education degree and is looking for employment opportunities as a youth worker.



Dainya first got on a horse at the age of three and has been passionate about horses ever since. As a trainer and barrel racing competitor, some might wonder why she wouldn’t choose a career in the equestrian field instead?

*“Because there’s a million horse trainers and not enough people helping the youth on the street. Not enough people who still believe in them. If they don’t have more people to stand up for them when they are youth, they will never learn how to become healthy, strong and independent adults.”*



# why I donated

I usually pick up our mail for my parents and that is where I first saw the card for the Stand Up 4 Youth campaign.

I immediately felt like I needed to do something. I know there are kids out there that don’t have parents or people that care about them and it bothers me so much. I want to change the world.

I donate toys to sick kids at BC Children’s Hospital, I give time to those in need, I now wanted to give my money in hopes that someone my age would be helped from it!

If everyone felt the desire to do what I did then maybe we could change the world! If these kids don’t have help now then what future will they have?

I’m 12; I have always been like this says my mom since I was little. I always want to help save or help something. I have a 6-year-old sister, and a newly adopted brother from Florida. I have always cared about things that matter.

I really hope that this encourages more people to donate to this campaign (StandUp4Youth); we can change the world together!

Thank You,  
Joshua Bilson

# What **others** are saying



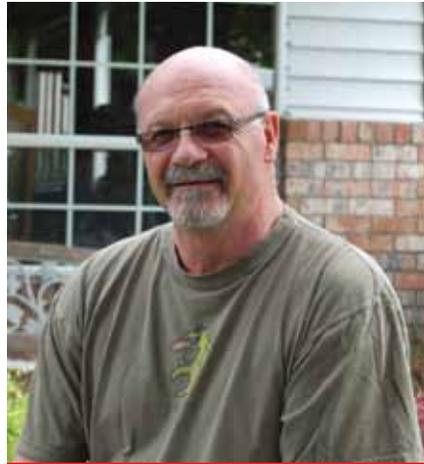
**John van Dongen**  
MLA, Abbotsford South

"Youth need to know that adults care about them. Every one of us should StandUp4Youth so that they can become contributing members of society. I am standing up for youth because I believe that everyone deserves a chance for a meaningful, productive life."



**Sgt. Casey Vinet**  
Abbotsford Police Dept.  
Youth Squad Supervisor

"To be a youth is more difficult and complex than ever before. Our young people are being exposed to external pressures at unprecedented levels and the social media culture has had more influence on them than many of us can fully understand. Supporting our youth is an investment we can't afford not to make. Together we can help them prosper and meet their full potential."



**Les Barkman**  
Councilor  
City of Abbotsford

"I am currently the City of Abbotsford's representative on the Abbotsford Youth Commission and I have seen and heard about many of the everyday issues our youth face these days. Many of them don't have strong positive role models in their life and they often don't know where or how to look for help. We need to StandUp4 Youth and be the kind of people they can trust and come to without any judgments being laid on them."



**Stan Pedersen**  
Trustee  
School District 34

"YES, I will definitely StandUp4Youth. Youth are the most important resource in our community. We must invest in this resource. We must encourage and support our youth so that they are filled with hope for their future, the future of their families, and the future of the community that they live in. Come on Abbotsford, StandUp4Youth!"



## STAND UP 4 YOUTH

Here is a short letter we received from a 21 year old Abbotsford female recently. (Please excuse her grammar.)

*"I have been coming to Youth Resource Centre for the longest time. When I first met Asli (Youth Resource Centre Worker), I was seventeen and was addicted to crack cocaine for couple years.*

*They give me bus tickets, take me to the food bank and take me to the doctor and the dentist. They also took me to rehab. When I was going through a rough time, Asli would drive around the city looking for me, chasing me all over town. She would always find me.*

*At the beginning of my recovery, I was often angry and felt like using. I wanted to be healthy and have a normal life but recovery was pretty tough. I had to remind myself that I am so close to my goal, why quit now. Over the last year, my attitude changed, I am not down about who I am. I have respect for myself. I do more positive things now. What I am most proud of is that I am healthy again."*

There is a quote stating that 'youth are one third of our population, but 100 percent of our future'.

No less than 25 of the 75 programs at Abbotsford Community Services work with and support hundreds of youth just like her to give them that one thing they need the most. Someone to stand up for them. Someone to give them hope.

## Here's **3 things** you can do

Visit [StandUp4Youth.com](http://StandUp4Youth.com) to find out how



Show  
**YOUR SUPPORT**

Send in a photo or a video showing your support along with your stories so we can share it on our website.



Join the  
**CONVERSATION**

Tell us what's on your mind about Abbotsford's youth. Got questions? We'll try to answer them.



Make a  
**DONATION**

**Our goal is to raise \$100,000** for all the programs at Abbotsford Community Services that support youth.

# OUT N' ABOUT IN ABBOTSFORD

Mobs, Markets, Events, Donations and Camps



Do you know what the Farmers' Market Nutrition Coupon Program (FMNCP) is about? Monica Grover does. Monica is the Coordinator for the South Asian Best 4 Babies Pregnancy Outreach program and during the farmers market season she is at the mid-week market located in Thunderbird Civic Plaza behind City Hall on Wednesday evenings.

That's where many South Asian men and women talk with Monica about their pregnancies, healthy food choices for their young families, and get their coupons to purchase eligible products including fruit, vegetables, meat, fish, nuts, dairy and fresh cut herbs.

The FMNCP provides low-income families and seniors who are enrolled in participating cooking



and skill-building programs with coupons each week to spend at their local farmers' market. Within cooking and skill-building sessions, participants learn to cook healthy, nutritious meals using locally procured farm products.

**Thanks goes to Market Manager Bruce Fatkin for all his support.**

On May 12th, Project G performed a surprise Flash Mob at the official opening of the Abbotsford Farm & Country Market.

"I've been involved in the community my entire life," says Project G creator Mary Boonstra. "In 2011, I decided to combine my love for dance and fitness with my desire to give back to this community. So I put together some fun dance routines, spread the word through social media, ask people to give a minimum \$5 to participate, give that money back to a local charity, and then we (anywhere from 30 – 100 dancers) perform at local venues often to the surprise and delight of bystanders."

It was obvious that Mary's vision of having fun while giving back to the community was happening at this Flash Mob dance routine to support the Abbotsford Food Bank. **Thanks Mary and fellow dancers!**



Thanks to a wonderful partnership with Athletes in Action, Northview Community Church and some very special donors, 65 Food Bank kids were able to participate in a week long soccer camp this summer.



"Soccer camp was the best part of my summer! I can't wait until next year." *David, young camper*

"My boys loved soccer camp. I would never have been able to afford this myself. I am very thankful for this opportunity for my boys. It was the highlight of their summer." *Sharon, soccer mom*



"This year I decided to take a week off my regular routine (work) to help out at camp. I had an incredible experience. These kids have forever touched my life." *Kevin, Volunteer Coach*



When it comes to recycling, education is serious business. That's why members of our summer 'Green Team' make every effort to answer questions, offer tips and show people the 'how to's' all things green at community events like Agrifair, the Mission Folk Music Festival and the Abbotsford Berry Festival.



**Above left to right:** Richard Aikema (far left), Lisa Sullivan (right) and Community Services Board Member David Smith (centre) accept a \$21,258 donation from Cascades Recovery Inc.'s Ken Rasmussen and Matt Dupuis on Earth Day at the Valley Road Recycling plant.

In 2009 Cascades Recovery made a commitment to donate a portion of their annual profits from every ton of raw paper products collected to the recycling education program. "This education component is truly unique. Because of Community Services' proactive attitude to recycling education, they are a perfect fit for us to live up to our commitment," comments Matt Dupuis.

**Thank you Cascades Recovery!**

# Connecting a caring community with causes that matter

Heat ramps  
up support  
for inner city  
school kids



Pictured above, Judy Sweeting (left) of the Abbotsford Heat Foundation presents Janice Olson, Supervisor of the Family Education program, a \$2,500 cheque to kick start S.E.L.F. for KIDS.

This recreation based after school program for 'at risk youth' in our inner city schools aims to teach kids skills and activities that will improve their emotional well-being, sense of belonging, empathy and respect for others. It's all about getting youth to make better choices for themselves, how to choose healthier friendships and activities and respect the community they live in.

"The program ran for one session early this spring and it proved to be very successful for both youth and their parents," says Olsen.

Comments from parents back up that claim.

'We are interacting more with our son and actually listening more.'

'I am having more real conversations with my child now.'

'We are different together. I don't get mad as much.'

'We have a new child on our hands. Thank you!'

'My child has gained more self-respect and more respect for others.'

**Thank You to the Abbotsford Heat Foundation for Standing Up 4 Youth!**

# STAPLES helps food bank families with back-to-school gear

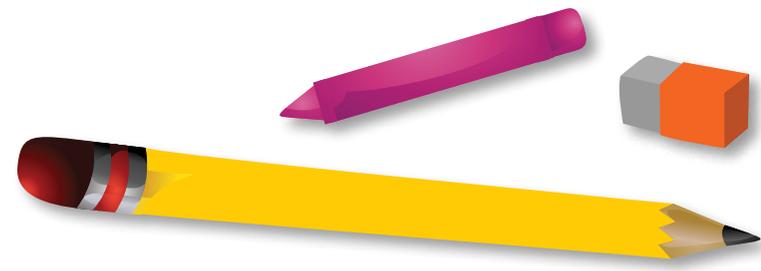
"It's the first time I've been a part of actually handing out the school supplies at the Food Bank. It's been really fun to see kids and families who really need this help receive the supplies. I'm very impressed and so proud of this partnership," says Karen Giguere, Staples Abbotsford Sales Manager.

For Oswaldo and his wife Cristina, with two boys aged nine and seven, the 'gift' of school supplies is a really big help. Oswaldo does have a full time job but his wife is still looking for full time work as a Certified Dental Assistant. It's been difficult since moving here from Venezuela eight years ago, but they are doing the best they can. They are very grateful for all the help from the Food

Bank and the Back-to-School Supplies program.

Staples stores fundraise for the Back-to-School program by having their sales associates ask store customers for a donation at the check out tills. "Once we partnered with the Food Bank, donations shot up. So we guarantee supplies up to a value of \$7,500.00 to be directed to Food Bank families."

**Thank you to all the customers who gave so generously and to Staples for your ongoing support!**



Above: Oswaldo and his two boys with Karen Giguere, Staples Abbotsford Sales Manager



**"I didn't qualify for the school start up benefit this year," says Leanne with a son in high school. "If I didn't have this help from the Food Bank and Staples, I don't know what I would have done. It would probably have meant less money for food this week."**



## Businesses pitch in to clean up for earth week

Kicking off the first 'CleanACSion' event on April 18th was Mayor Bruce Banman and ACS Executive Director, Rod Santiago planting a tree in front of the main Abbotsford Community Services building on Montrose Avenue in honor of Earth Week.

Then, with a lot of help from some of our business friends, about 50 people were deployed to various parks and trails throughout the city to

clean up the garbage, bring it back, and have it disposed of properly.

Some of the interesting items collected included a Christmas tree, tires, and garden hoses. Yes ... these were all found in our local parks.

Taking care of the environment is obviously important to Advanced Nutrients, Bobcat Country, Vancity and two branches of the Prospera Credit Union.

Top to Bottom:  
Bobcat Country,  
VanCity, two branches  
of Prospera Credit Union  
and Advanced Nutrients



*Thanks for all your help!*



ensures ongoing access for the community



«As a low income senior myself, I have relied on these computers to keep in contact with friends and relatives, print out bills, research information and look up resources to help me in all aspects of my life. I cannot afford to pay for monthly internet service or to buy my own computer.»

Dawna is a volunteer in the ACS computer access lab and has been a regular since 2006. When she heard the service might have to close, she wrote a very strong letter. Here is an excerpt:

"A client rushed in 25 minutes before closing needing to take a test online to receive his Food Safe Certificate so that he could start work the next day. So that he didn't feel rushed, we kept the computer lab open later than normal. He passed the test, was able to start a full time job after years of no success at finding employment, and was so grateful for what I thought was just a few extra minutes of my time.

This lab helps hundreds of people every month ranging in age from teenagers to senior citizens. They come to access housing information, government forms, social services information, print resumes, take tests, and look for employment on job websites."

Abbotsford Community Services has had an established relationship with Mike's Computer Shop for many years. When owner Mike Hughes was approached to consider helping to support the computer access lab he said it just made sense.

"Community Services has helped us grow our business, so why wouldn't we support this lab? This is the biggest donation we have made to date and it feels really good. Everywhere you look in this community you see Abbotsford Community Services and helping out locally is the best thing."

**Thank you Mike's Computer Shop!**

## RAMADA'S culinary staff hand over 100 christmas dinners to go



**Thank you to the Ramada Plaza and all of your generous business partners who participated!**

Owner Judy Sweeting and Christine Lane, Director of Sales and Marketing at the Ramada Plaza & Conference Centre came up with a very interesting idea last fall.

Here is an excerpt of a letter sent out to many of their business contacts and partners last November.

"Our challenge to you – Help us Feed 100 Families this Christmas! As a long time supporter of Abbotsford Community Services and the Food Bank/Christmas Bureau, we would like to challenge our business colleagues and corporate partners to help us feed 100 additional families a special Christmas dinner prepared by the culinary team at the Ramada Plaza."

"Following the success of our inaugural "Christmas Dinner to Go" program last year, in which we donated a percentage of sales to the Abbotsford Food Bank, we wondered how this could be expanded to include families in need in our community; families and seniors identified as being in need of extra support."

The letter then explained the details of how interested individuals or businesses could purchase Christmas Dinners to Go and receive a charitable donation receipt from Abbotsford Community Services.

Many food bank families and seniors were surprised and thrilled to receive such a special Christmas gift.

Many Services - Four Locations

# AbbotsfordWORKS

«Every person is capable of finding meaningful employment and every employer deserves to have the right employee in order to be profitable.»

AbbotsfordWORKS offers excellent career resources to the community.

**Provides job seekers with access to:**

Skills Development, Wage Subsidy, Self-Employment & Short-Term Training

**Offers a fully operational resource room complete with:**

fax, computers, and labour market resources at three locations

**Go to** [www.abbotsfordworks.com](http://www.abbotsfordworks.com) for addresses and contact information as well as a complete list of services offered.

AbbotsfordWORKS BC, an Employment Program of British Columbia, is funded by the Government of Canada and the Province of BC. There are six Community Partnerships involved as listed below.



## A Dream Fulfilled through Self-Employment

“My life is much, much better today compared to five years ago. My dream when I first came to Canada was to have my own business. Now, thanks to the help of many people, my dream has come true.”

Kulwinder used to work in greenhouses and food processing facilities throughout the lower mainland. It was hard physical labour and the hours were long. She took ESL classes after picking berries all day, all the while raising her daughter as a single mom. After completing a hair dressing course she worked part-time in a local hair salon but kept dreaming about opening her own salon.

Friends encouraged Kulwinder to pursue her dream and they suggested she seek help from Abbotsford Community Services and the AbbotsfordWORKS program which began in April 2012.

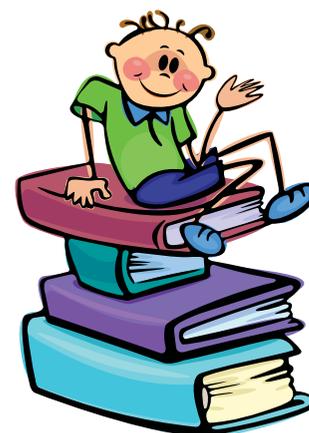
She enrolled in the Self-Employment Program and admits she could never have established a business without their assistance. “They helped me so much professionally, mentally and financially. This is the best place to come if anyone needs help like I did,” she says.

It has not been easy for Kulwinder. All of her family live in India, she is raising her daughter as a single mom and there was a period of time when she needed lots of support in other areas of her life. And she found that support at Abbotsford Community Services.

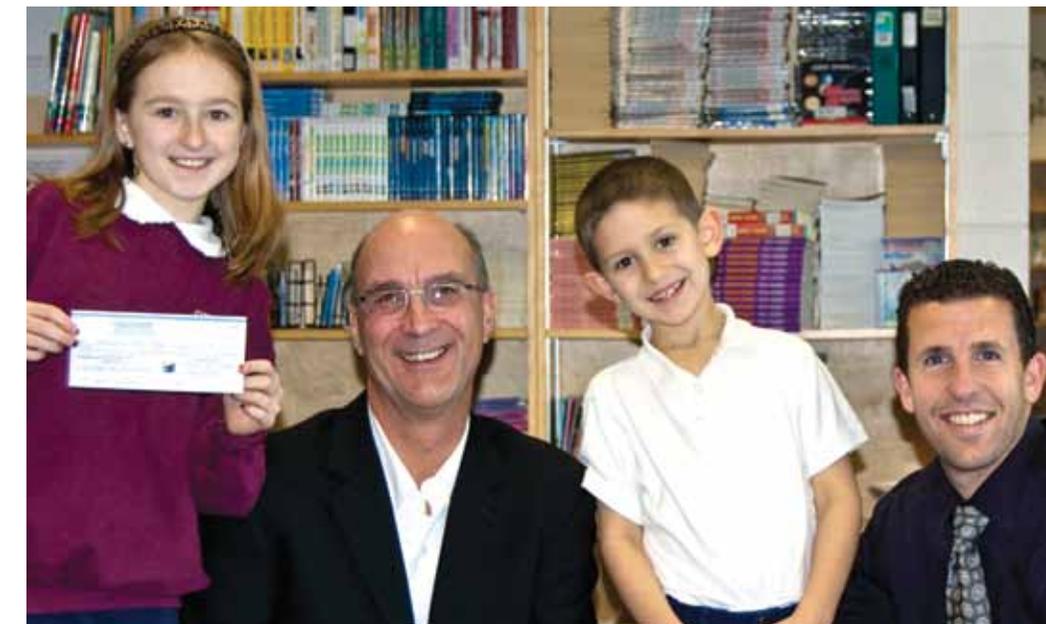
“Now everything is working well and I have to thank all the people who helped me.”

## Ceilidh on books and giving back

Ceilidh has been fund raising for causes she cares about for most of her young life. In the fall of 2011, she took it to a whole new level.



“I think it’s really important for kids to know that they can help and that they’re the ones that can help the most and make the biggest change!”



Ceilidh presents a \$900 cheque to Food Bank Supervisor Dave Murray seen here with brother Mac and Principal Bradford of Auguston Traditional School.

I started the book club at my elementary school last year for the simple reason of wanting a group of nice kids to talk about books with! I like to be a leader and start clubs and events because I think it’s fun when you’re able to do nice things for your community for the reason of making them happy or giving them opportunities to have fun and connect with people.

I thought last year because I’d be going into grade five, that I wanted to have my own book club open to all ages to support the idea of reading.

When the book club first started up, I was surprised to get a lot more members than I expected. Because of the really nice group of kids

I wanted to do something fun with them. My mom one day came up with an idea in the fall to have a book sale at our school where we’d have people donate their old books and we’d have a sale and sell all of them for a loonie!

We got many generous donations... way more than we expected! Most of the books looked brand new and amazing! By the end of the sale we earned almost eight hundred dollars!

I wanted to donate the money to the food bank because I appreciate what they do to help people which I learned is a lot more than supply food for people in need of it!

I really had a lot of fun in the experience and learned a lot!

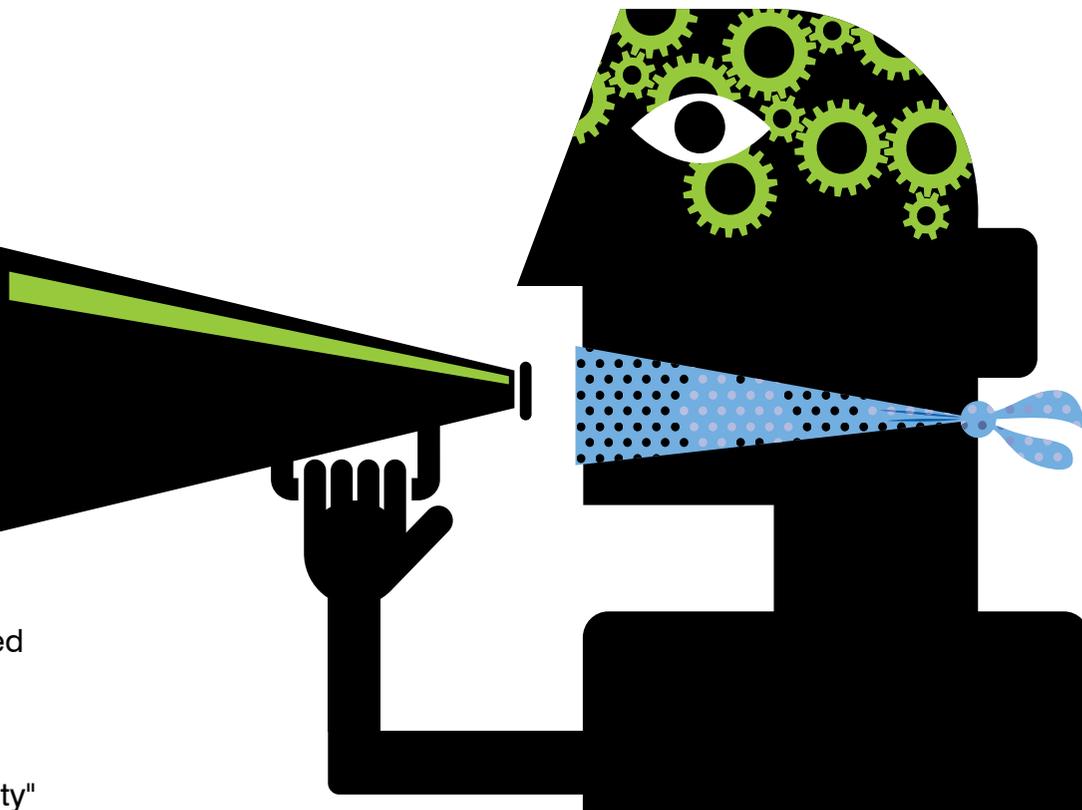
## giving voice to people in need

Community legal advocates get to the bottom of complex welfare, E.I. and tenants' issues

"Early into our meeting she broke down in tears and removed her hat to reveal that she had pulled most of her hair out of her scalp and was talking about how to end her pain. I suggested that she needed immediate help with her emotional state rather than completing an application for disability"

Ilena's job as a Community Legal Advocate is to help people who are having any type of difficulty with MSD (welfare), Employment Insurance and tenants experiencing problems with landlords.

The person Ilena described had come to her office requesting help with a provincial disability application. "But with the client's permission I called mental health to find out how she could get immediate help to keep her safe from further self harm. The mental health worker advised me that the best thing to do was take her to emergency at the hospital so she could be admitted to the psychiatric unit and she called the hospital to notify them we were on our way."



While they waited in admitting at the hospital the client showed Ilena a picture of her children on her broken cell phone. The photo was the phone's screen saver and even though the phone didn't work anymore, she kept it because it held that treasured photo.

"Four months later that woman called me and was now ready to proceed with the application for disability. She told me about all the assistance she had received the past few months, and all the support she was now receiving in order to stabilize her life."

For persons with a disability such as a hearing impairment, dealing with housing

issues can be overwhelming. That's why one woman broke down in tears of gratitude recently when Community Legal Advocate Ellen Boyes negotiated a solution to a problem with her landlord regarding her dog. The client was in the process of training her new puppy to assist with waking and alerting her to alarms and noises in her home. Unfortunately the dog was not a certified service dog and that presented a problem for the landlord.

But when you have a hearing impairment, communicating clearly can be difficult. That's why the Community Legal Advocates act as a voice for people who need help.

## FIGHTING for the LEGAL RIGHTS of FARM WORKERS



"Many farm labourers have no idea of their rights and it is our job to make sure they are being treated fairly according to the law."

"I can remember being terribly cold during the rainy season. It was so awful," says Gurcharan Dhillon, the Legal Advocacy Program Coordinator. Gurcharan worked as a farm labourer from age 14 to 24 in local berry fields, brussels sprouts, broccoli and cauliflower fields. "



Jaz had worked with one employer for four years but was laid off when the farmer replaced all his manual berry pickers with a harvesting machine. When Jaz responded to a newspaper employment ad, he was given a job right over the phone.

He worked steadily for five months but during that time received only two paycheques. "Everything will be settled at the end of the season when I get paid for bringing in my crop," his employer told him. Jaz waited for two more months before speaking to his employer again about payment. Again the employer stalled and still no paycheque.

"Eventually Jaz came to us for help and we talked to him about his rights as laid out in the Employment Standards Branch in BC," says Dhillon. "We filed a complaint on his behalf and even with

us fighting for Jaz's rightful wages, it still took another three months for him to get paid."

This is a typical scenario which happens all too often. Last year Dhillon worked with a group of 19 agriculture labourers, all working for one employer without being paid in a timely manner.

"Ninety percent of farm owners are good and treat their employees well. But it's because of that other 10 percent that we keep very busy all year round."

Her advice to immigrant farm workers is simple: if you have been working for a full month without receiving any compensation, contact us or the Employment Standards Branch of BC immediately. And secondly, if you work for a farm contractor, make sure the contractor is licensed with the Employment Standards Branch of BC.



**THANK YOU**  
to all of our amazing  
**VOLUNTEERS**



**Cristina** – Abbotsford Food Bank Dental Clinic

Cristina and her family came to Canada in 2005 from Venezuela. She has been volunteering at the Dental Clinic since January 2012.

As a Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) she takes X-rays, polishes teeth, conducts pre-examinations before the dentist sees the patient, cleans and sterilizes the instruments, assists patients and dentists with whatever is needed.

“It feels good to help the community by doing something useful and everyone is so grateful; the patients, dentists and all the Food Bank staff. I’m getting so much experience by working with lots of dentists who each have their own way of doing things.”

Cristina and her family were Food Bank clients in 2005 until both she and her husband secured employment. Things were going along pretty well but after she was injured, the family needed the help of the Food Bank once more. She went to MTI Community College to earn her CDA, but finding employment in the dental field has been tough. So she decided to volunteer at the Food Bank’s Free Dental Clinic.

“I feel much better being able to give back especially since they have helped me and my family so much.”



**Trevor** – AbbyDads

Trevor, a father of two young daughters, has been a part of My Daddy and Me for at least seven years.

Four years ago he began taking on more responsibilities including organizing a story-time, helping with cleanup, and eventually taking on the crafts as his own. He does it because “they (the program staff and other participants) helped me out when I really needed it, and volunteering lets me feel good about being a dad.”

“The best part of being here is seeing all the kids so happy spending time with their dad.”

One of the things he has learned over the years is that there are lots of fathers going through the same situation he is; seeing his children only on alternating weekends. But he’s also learned patience and how to relax in his role as a father.

Trevor brings a unique creative flair to the drop in, as a committed listening ear for those going through ‘hell’, and is constantly promoting Abby Dads and involved fathering wherever he is.

\*Our Apologies. Space did not permit featuring the more than 1000 volunteers who contribute to making a BIG difference in the lives of our clients at Abbotsford Community Services.



**Joanne** – Abbotsford Youth Health Centre

Joanne is a Registered Nurse volunteering by providing continuity of care from beginning to end for the patients who come to the Abbotsford Youth Health drop-in clinic.

She sees everyone the first time they come in to the clinic, does their medical intake by checking all their vitals and documenting their medical history before seeing the doctor. She enjoys the work because she is able to use her skills with patients who are “totally terrified because they have gotten misinformation. To watch them leave feeling so much better about their situation really makes my day.”

“This is the first time I have volunteered in my professional capacity as a nurse and I absolutely love it! It’s not like I have to go to work, I choose to come here. This clinic provides a fun atmosphere. Engaging with these ‘marginalized’ youth, getting to know them and understand them a bit better has been really good.”



**Barry** – ELSA (English Language Services for Adults)

Barry began volunteering in 2010 by assisting teachers and students in the ELSA program. As a retired teacher and school administrator, he enjoys using his teaching strengths and elements of his past profession.

“I enjoy this volunteer experience because I believe it’s important to have a purpose. This benefits others as well as myself. It’s been very satisfying. I’ve met lots of wonderful people, people of all ethnic backgrounds.”

“I recall a saying that ‘schools are harbors of hope’. Well these ELSA classrooms are definitely harbors of hope. These people are so brave and they have earned my respect in their ability to cope with this new country and their determination to become part of this community.” Yes, he thoroughly enjoys “being here.”

Barry believes that if you have the ability, why not use your skills and talents even if you are retired. Become a volunteer today!

