

Stories

Archway Community Services Magazine

2022 / 2023

*People Helping People
Momiyélhtel*



Building Bridges & Breaking Barriers

Increasing Access to Food p. 7
From Afghanistan to Canada p. 35



OUR MISSION

Archway Community Services fosters community wellbeing and social justice through positive action and leadership.

OUR VISION

Justice, opportunities, and equitable access for all.

OUR VALUES

Inclusivity – We welcome everyone, showing consideration and respect for all experiences and ideas.

Compassion – We empower others, and defend and advocate for human dignity.

Excellence – We never stop learning and improving. We pursue our vision with determination, ethics, and heart.

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OUR PROGRAMS

You can learn more about our programs at [Archway.ca](https://www.archway.ca)

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge that we gather on the traditional unceded territory of the Stō:ló people. Stō:ló territory extends from the mouth of the Fraser River to Boston Bar. Locally, this includes the Matsqui First Nation and Sumas First Nation. We give them thanks for sharing their land and resources with us.

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Letter from the Central Executive Officer

If Archway had not been around this past year, what would be the impact on our communities?

Where would people have turned to for help? How would the intricate net of partnering social supports have been weakened? Coming up with an answer to these questions is a bit of a theoretical exercise. Nevertheless, contemplating the hypothetical implications bears consideration. Without Archway Community Services and our vision of "justice, opportunities and equitable access for all" we would have missed out on the following:

2,450 volunteers would not have contributed 35,061 hours of time (that's the equivalent of 4,674.8 work days!), expertise and passion to make our communities better. From volunteer drivers checking in on homebound older adults; to Canadian long-timers helping newcomers practice English or navigate life in a foreign culture; to various businesses and churches putting together Starfish Packs for kids; to dentists and dental technicians treating gum disease and performing oral procedures for those who would otherwise live with the pain and stigma of decay, and many others.

There would not have been a flood report which captured the lived experiences, learnings, and suggestions of flood victims. We learned that for the average survey participant, there is

a probability of PTSD diagnosis (based on an adapted IES-R). Two years post the November 2021 flood is identified as the peak time for disaster-related suicide, depression, substance use, and other mental health issues. How do we rally supports needed now?

433 government assisted refugees from Afghanistan and 466 displaced individuals from war-torn Ukraine would not have been assisted with securing accommodations, learning English, getting kids in school, finding work, and receiving trauma supports.

155 youth at high risk of becoming gang involved or already involved with gangs – and 69 families – would have increased their risk of getting further pulled into a life of guns, gangs and substance use. Instead, 81% lowered their overall level of risk.

There wouldn't have been an Abbotsford and a Mission recycling depot for 71,828 residents to drop off their household recycling items. Furthermore, more than 6,183 tonnes of recyclable materials (that's the weight of 31 Boeing 747s) would have ended up in landfills.

We would not have spearheaded advocacy during the transit strike calling for a resolution. Global News, CKNW, CBC Radio, CBC News, and local media would not have interviewed Archway to hear of the impact of the four-month strike on isolated seniors, persons with disabilities, youth and newcomers. In amplifying the voices of those most disenfranchised throughout the Fraser Valley, the urgency of the need for resolution increased and the strike was finally resolved in July.

Fortunately, my introductory questions are moot. Archway was here last year. We did accomplish the items above, and so much more. My deep gratitude to our impassioned staff and volunteers, wise Board and staff leadership, and our dedicated community partners who together keep living out our mission of "fostering community wellbeing and social justice through positive action and leadership."

Rod Santiago

ROD SANTIAGO
Central Executive Officer



Letter from the Board President

Really, it strikes me that the only human that truly enjoys change must be a baby with a wet nappy. For some, change brings uncertainty. For others, change brings opportunities! For myself, as I enter my 10th year on the Board of Directors, I must admit that I can barely recognize the place! I have witnessed growth in programming, changes in personnel, the comings, and goings of Board members, and of course the re-branding of the agency from Abbotsford to Archway Community Services.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Victorian poet, captured the dying words of King Arthur on his deathbed thus: "The old order changeth, yielding place to new." (Insert last gasp and eyes closing for dramatic effect!) The wise king knew that his passing would bring changes to future generations by those with views different from his.

For my part, this year concludes my term as President of the Board of Directors. After five years, it is time to move along. Minus the last gasp of the dying king, I feel very confident that the coming months will see new faces, new ideas and new energy brought to the work of the Board of Directors. I look forward to supporting my successor.

Among the many changes that we can anticipate in the coming years, none is

more significant than the Board's new Strategic Plan. The previous plan took the agency more purposefully into the areas of Senior Services, Mental Wellness, and Indigenous Inclusion.

The new plan aligns in greater detail with the work of the staff in areas of mental wellness, justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion – including broadening Archway's Indigenous lens, and a new area of focus – housing. These are ambitious targets indeed, but Archway has never strayed from its mission of building a stronger community by addressing the areas of need.

The Board sponsored its two community-based events this year – the annual Community Builders' Awards, and the annual Archway Charity Golf Tournament. Both were tremendously successful. Both events contribute to the public's knowledge of who Archway is and the important role it plays in building a healthy community.

The Community Builders event recognized the contributions of several more individuals and businesses in Abbotsford who impact the work of community development. Likewise,

the Golf Tournament, provided a great golf experience, and a bottom line of \$100,000+. No mean feat!!

And so, I end where I began. Like the rhythm of the ocean tides, the agency responds to the ebb and flow change.

And allow me to say that my five years as President have been most rewarding. I have treasured my time working with Rod through the various challenges that have challenged us in recent years. But most importantly, I have enjoyed our work together building a great team and experiencing the joy of being part of the Archway family. The pleasure to serve has been mine.

All the best.

Steve Carlton

STEVE CARLTON
Board President



From War-Torn Ukraine to a New Life:

Oksana's Journey of Hope in Canada

From the rubble of war-torn Ukraine to the warmth of a welcoming Canadian community, Oksana has found hope and a new life despite unimaginable adversity.

Oksana previously lived in Mariupol, Ukraine with her husband and six children ranging from four to seventeen. Her husband, Mykola, worked as an electrician and she worked in transportation.

"We had everything for a normal life in our hometown – friends, relatives, house, church, and jobs. We were happy and were seeing how our city was changing for the better. It was a complete shock to us when Russia had attacked Ukraine. We were completely unprepared for what happened in 2022," recalls Oksana.

Russia's invasion involved dozens of missile strikes on cities all over

Ukraine starting in February 2022. Oksana's former life was over and her family was suddenly in great danger.

"The shelling did not stop day and night. And planes flew over our house, and then we heard explosions. It was terrible."

After a few days with no electricity, water or heat in their home, Oksana made the brave and difficult decision to move herself, her husband, her mother and six children to Germany to apply for a visa to come to Canada.

"We chose Canada because it's a favorable country for immigration, with a large Ukrainian diaspora and a high level of security. That was really important for us," said Oksana.

Oksana knew very little English when she came to Canada in September 2022 and Mykola had no experience with

speaking English, which made their integration into Canadian society a struggle when they first arrived.

Archway welcomed Oksana and Mykola to Abbotsford, providing support on how to access the Food Bank, how to cook Canadian meals, and helping them get their children enrolled in school.



Oksana with her husband Mykola and their six children in Mill Lake



Oksana could not believe the support her family received from the community. In particular, she wants to thank MCC, the Abbotsford School District, and Archway. Their collective efforts became the pillars of strength that lifted Oksana and her family from the depths of uncertainty to the promise of a new beginning.

"I want to express my deep gratitude to everyone who helped us, because without them it was impossible to stay here," said Oksana.

Oksana and Mykola were enrolled in Archway's Language Instruction

for Newcomers classes. Her English has improved allowing her to work at a local store in Abbotsford.

Through Archway, Oksana was paired with Anna Tykhonchenko, Archway's Ukrainian Settlement Worker, who worked with her to help her adapt to Canadian society.

Anna started working at Archway in 2022. She helps Ukrainian refugees navigate their new life, access available services and find ways to support themselves. Having fled Ukraine herself in March 2022,

Anna is able to relate to her clients and assess their unique needs.

"One of the biggest challenges that we have when coming to Canada is the struggle of having not chosen this life. We run from the death, from the war and there's no time to prepare for this moving," said Anna.

Displaced Ukrainians have had their hopes, plans, and properties destroyed and must build new lives in unfamiliar countries.

"You just think about how to save your life, how to save your children, and that's all," said Anna.

Anna is grateful to have the chance to help people through her work at Archway. It's healing for her when she sees them succeed and she feels inspired by and hopeful for her clients, like Oksana.

"Archway did good things for us. They helped in placement for my children for school, various seminars for adaptation and how to search for jobs," remembers Oksana in the early days of her arrival to Abbotsford.

"I'd like to thank Anna for her consultation. Whenever I had a question, I could just call her and she'd always help whenever I needed it."

Pleasantly surprised by how welcoming Canadians have been towards them, Oksana and Mykola plan to stay in Canada and apply for permanent residency.

"I really see a future for my family in Canada because we can work, we have access to education - my children are excited to go to school - and there is a peaceful sky above our heads," said Oksana. ■



ABBOTSFORD FOOD BANK

Increasing Access to Food Amongst Record-High Food Insecurity

The Archway Food Bank, in Abbotsford, is no exception to the increasing trend of food insecurity across Canada. British Columbia food banks have experienced a 31% increase in food bank visits since 2019.

The Archway Food Bank is seeing more and more households accessing its services every month. Staff and volunteers are working to meet

the need through increased hours, expanding satellite locations, and further expanding food distribution and access options.

Home Delivery Client: Tammy's Story

Tammy never imagined that she would have to access a food bank until a tragic motor vehicle accident in 2016 left her unable to walk or work.

After a drawn-out struggle, she now has a scooter which helps her get around, but she needs assistance getting in and out of the scooter. In the years following her accident, Tammy was repeatedly denied disability assistance despite being "100% disabled."

She was able to live with her son but without her own source of income, she turned to the Archway Food Bank in 2020.

"I realized I had nowhere else to turn, so I called Archway as a last resort and they said they were going to help me," recounted Tammy.

Archway Food Bank's Home Delivery program brings food to Abbotsford residents who have mobility limitations and are unable to pick up food in person. Home Delivery participants receive a monthly food delivery that includes both non-perishable and fresh food items.

"I call the volunteers my 'arch angels' because Archway saved my life."

"We mostly have to limit home delivery to people with medical reasons, because we only have so many volunteer drivers," said Rebecca Thuro, Archway Food Bank Programs Supervisor. "We were able to do some extra deliveries during the transit strike though and also offered flexible pick-up times if people needed."

Through the Home Delivery program, Tammy received not just food but a lifeline of connection in those monthly visits. The food was only part of the equation; it was the human interaction, the acknowledgment of her worth, and the camaraderie that really stood out to her.

"Home delivery helps a lot. They don't just bring it directly to me, but they also unpack the food for

me which is very helpful and kind. They talk with me, they're concerned for me and sometimes they end up staying for an hour or so just chatting. I love it," said Tammy.

found it difficult to accept the fact that she needed assistance, because she has always been the type of person that loves to give back to others. The thought of relying



Tammy, a Food Bank home delivery client

Tammy rarely leaves her home and needs assistance to get into her scooter so having that connection to the volunteers who come regularly has made all the difference to her outlook on life.

"I call the volunteers my 'arch angels' because Archway saved my life. And I'm gonna cry because they were the only ones that took time to help, you know. They treat people with respect and dignity. They don't look down at you. They don't judge how you are."

The caring demeanor of the Archway team allowed Tammy to overcome her feelings of hesitancy and discomfort about seeking help. Tammy initially

on others was an unfamiliar and uncomfortable territory for her.

"At first, I cried a lot because I'm the type of person that does things on my own with no help. To have someone help me, it was hard because I wasn't used to it," said Tammy.

Despite her initial reluctance, Tammy's experience with the Archway Food Bank was a revelation for her, because she found the support of those who understood her struggles and treated her with dignity.

Tammy currently lives on a farm and has always loved gardening - she has about 100 corns crops which

her thoughtful neighbour helps her tend to. Despite her challenges, Tammy has passionately set her sights on a new goal - to walk into Archway and donate some of the corn harvested from her garden.

Tammy devotes time to practicing walking each day to retrain her body. She is incredibly grateful for Archway, feeling compelled to give back to the organization that she wholeheartedly touts as having saved her life.

"I would be lost without the Archway Food Bank and I think I'd probably be homeless," said Tammy.

"I would be lost without the Archway Food Bank and I think I'd probably be homeless."

Tammy's story stands as a testament to the power that connection and service can have on an individual's life.

Food Bank Demand on the Rise

Food insecurity is on the rise, especially with inflation and housing costs going up substantially.

"We are helping people stay in their homes because what they can save by picking up food through the food bank,

they can direct towards their housing costs," said Rebecca.

In their annual Hunger Report, Food Banks Canada found that for the first time, there was a significant increase in the number of food bank clients who reported employment as their main source of income. This trend is being echoed at the Archway Food Bank.

"It's mostly families that come to our food bank. Over 51% of the households are families with children and another 17% are seniors," shared Rebecca. "These numbers also include newcomers to Canada and those with disabilities."

In 2021, around 2,500 individuals accessed the Archway Food Bank every month. In 2023, a minimum of 4,000 individuals have accessed the Archway Food Bank each month so far.

Keeping up with this demand is difficult. Food and financial donations peak during holiday

seasons leaving the rest of the year with increasingly empty shelves.

More food is being purchased than ever before as individual and corporate donations can't keep up with the increased need. A silver lining is that with the increased purchases, they've been able to secure a greater wholesale discount.

"This means that the donor dollar is able to go farther in purchasing food than it ever was before," said Rebecca.

Expanded Access & Options

The Food Bank offers diverse food options such as South Asian friendly hampers and halal hampers.

"It's important to provide food that is culturally preferred and something that clients will actually be able to use," said George Carter, Archway Food Bank Food Access Supervisor.

South Asian hampers include atta (flour), oil, sugar, lentils, chickpeas,



Staff with food and gifts for clients celebrating Ramadan

"Seven Oaks Alliance Church is opening a Ukrainian satellite this year. They already operate a neighbourhood satellite and now want to open another night specifically for Ukrainians which will include translators," shared Rebecca.

The food bank is also working on the logistics of opening up a larger location to meet the need of increased access to South Asian hampers.

"The new space has a larger parking lot and already has South Asian-specific programming, so it reduces some of the barriers to accessing and accepting help," said Rebecca.

"Satellite locations and partnering with existing organizations allow us to meet people where they are, both physically and culturally," said George.

While faced with escalating demand, the food bank team has still found ways to make food more accessible to anyone in need.

rice, fresh produce and other pantry staples. Halal hampers include chickpeas, red lentils, haricot beans, cooking oil, sugar, rice, flour, fresh produce, and halal chicken.

The food bank used to be closed on Fridays; however, with such high demand for food, Fridays are now dedicated for halal hamper pick-ups.

"This allows us to reduce traffic on other days, ensure our shelves are properly stocked with halal items and have staff and volunteers who speak languages like Arabic so they can welcome the clients," said Rebecca.

There were 40 households receiving halal hampers in 2021 and there

are now just over 200 halal hampers given out each month.

Some of this growth can be attributed to the hundreds of refugees from Afghanistan and Syria that have arrived over the past year, many of whom are assisted by the Archway Settlement Services team.

There are currently 18 satellite locations for people to pick up food other than at the main location in historic downtown Abbotsford. These options increase the operating hours and may be more convenient for those who don't live close to the main location. Some satellites are integrated into existing community programming like supportive housing.



Donate online at:
AbbotsfordFoodBank.com/Donate

Food Donations can be
dropped off at:
33914 Essendene Ave, Abbotsford



Home delivery volunteers

From Client to Youth Peer Support Worker:

Alex's Story

With the unconditional support of Foundry Abbotsford, Alex was able to navigate through difficult times during her youth and find a place of belonging. Today, as a youth peer support worker at the very same Foundry centre, Alex is determined to provide youth with

the same level of individual care and compassion that she had received.

Foundry offers services to youth aged 12-24 including mental health and substance use support, drop-in counselling, physical and sexual healthcare, youth and family peer support and social services.

Alex first heard of Foundry Abbotsford when she was 15 after receiving a referral from her counsellor. Struggling under the weight of severe bullying at school, Alex needed a safe and secure place to feel connected with others.

Within Foundry's nurturing environment, Alex discovered a plethora of services that worked

for her. From accessing the physical health clinic to participating in group outings and workshops, each resource played a vital role in her path to recovery.

"I continued accessing supports from Foundry over the next few years because it was a very comfortable space."

At Foundry, she found a sense of independence and control over her mental and physical health as she was assured confidentiality by the health clinic

staff. Alex also enjoyed the relatable and approachable nature of the practitioners as they worked with her to achieve the best outcome.

"It was more like a conversation, instead of feeling like they're the older one in the room and they know better," recalls Alex.

During her four years as a client she worked with Nicole Clarke, a Youth and Family Engagement Worker. Nicole's continuous support, even after she ceased using the services, left a lasting impact on Alex.

"It was really nice to know that there was someone outside of my family that genuinely cared and wanted me to get better."

Nicole kept in contact with Alex and would periodically text her to tell her about upcoming group activities that she may be interested in.

"There was never any cut off from connection. I was always welcome when I was ready," said Alex.

This non-intrusive communication model allowed Alex to heal at her own pace without the pressure of immediate responses, alleviating the anxiety that often accompanies seeking help.

"You could take two weeks to respond or three years to respond

to a text and no one's going to be angry with you. I know when I was going through my depression, I was just avoiding my phone. But Nicole made me feel like the Foundry's doors were always open," said Alex.

Alex's time as a Foundry client inspired her to pursue a dream she held close to her heart—a career in psychology with a focus on youth support. After a youth support training program with Fraser Health, Alex is proud to have landed her dream role as a youth peer support worker at

"It was really nice to know that there was someone outside of my family that genuinely cared and wanted me to get better."

Foundry. Her personal experience as a client gives her unique insight and empathy, allowing her to relate to her clients on a deeper level.

"Our approach to peer support is based on the idea that those who have experienced adversity can provide support and mentorship to others facing similar situations, encouraging them to continue their wellness journey," said Elizabeth Shields, Manager at Foundry Abbotsford.

Foundry Abbotsford recently celebrated its 5th anniversary with an open house which was attended

by community partners as well as youth and their families.

"It's amazing to see the level of support we receive from the community in providing youth with equitable access to integrated health and social services," said Elizabeth.

Foundry's Integrated Youth Services model gives staff the flexibility to connect with youth, allowing them to truly meet youth where they are. This involves active listening, providing emotional support, offering advocacy and helping youth identify and connect to services and supports.

"The services provided by Foundry are helpful to anyone and everyone because there's so many different things youth can access. It's always an open door," touts Alex.

Determined to pay forward the life-changing impact she experienced firsthand, Alex is proud to be a youth peer support worker for the very Foundry that provided her with unwavering support and a sense of belonging all those years ago.

"No one ever made me feel bad for what I was going through or made me feel like I was on my own. I was always welcomed, and I want to provide the same experience that I got for anyone who walks in – just positivity." ■



Alex, Youth Peer Support Worker at the Foundry



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Inside Foundry Abbotsford



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Providing Reliable and Affordable Transportation

"Since having brain surgery, I have not been able to drive because of dizziness, blurred vision, and nausea. For the first few months following my surgery, I had friends drive me to my medical appointments, but as time went on, it became hard to continue to ask for help," shared KC.

"Then, I found the Archway Community Van program who was able to set me up with rides to and from my appointments for a small fee, as taking a taxi was out of my budget.

"This program has been absolutely life-changing for me. I've been able to take care of my health and manage my pain."

The Community Van offers a low barrier, affordable transportation service to residents in Abbotsford. The program originated in 2020 as a pilot project with support from community partners including numerous local

businesses and the City of Abbotsford. It currently operates with grants and generous contributions from donors and users of the service.

The service is available weekdays and costs are kept nominal through the commitment of volunteer drivers. The service can be used to access support and services throughout Abbotsford, and in some instances, to other communities. Abbotsford is the largest municipality in British Columbia in terms of land area, and transportation options can be limited for vulnerable populations who may not have proximity or require additional support to reach transit stops.

Clients only pay 65 cents a kilometer which is significantly cheaper than taxis or Ubers, where a fee upwards of \$3 can be charged before the ride even begins.

Sarah's Story

Sarah first started accessing Community Van two years ago.

"It was important for me to no longer have to rely on my son," said Sarah.

She uses the service to attend medical appointments, run errands, and visit her husband who lives in a care home.

"Without the Community Van, I would not have the opportunity to visit my husband as often as I am able to," said Sarah.

Due to the flexibility of Archway's Community Van program, she can safely take her husband back to his nursery to visit former employees, and have his favorite sushi for lunch; providing him with a much-needed change of scenery.

"I prefer to use Community Van as it is one third or less the cost of a taxi," said Sarah.

"Our service is not only affordable, but it provides clients with a social connection as they are able to connect with the volunteers and see them on a regular

basis," said Alida Swanson, the Community Van Coordinator.

"The drivers are polite and very accommodating. I have never had any issues with the service," said Sarah.

Impact of the Transit Strike

In the spring of 2023, there was a four-month transit strike that severely impacted public transit users including many of the most vulnerable in our community. At 124 days, the Fraser Valley transit strike was the second longest transit strike in BC history.

Seniors, students, newcomers, those with disabilities and low-income families were among those that were hardest hit, with few alternatives that worked for their budget.

"The volunteer drivers and staff at Archway take care of me like I am a family member! This ride program is helping me get on my feet again!"

"We were hearing from seniors who were experiencing increased isolation and loneliness because of the transit strike which significantly impacted their mental health and well-being.



Program Coordinator Alida driving the Community Van

Clients weren't able to pick up their food bank hampers or travel to work, which put them even further behind," said Rod Santiago, Archway's Central Executive Officer (CEO).

"Youth and newcomers had difficulty getting to school and there were adult learners falling asleep in their English classes because they were so tired from working overtime to pay for the increased transportation costs."

"During the transit strike, the number of clients requesting rides doubled," said Alida. "The increased demand was very hard to meet with our limited number of volunteers and the restricted number of staff hours to coordinate all the rides."

The program had to start booking 10 days in advance to accommodate the increased requests.

Since the beginning of the year, the program has had 117 new clients which is far more than ever before.

"The strike demonstrated how important reliable and affordable public transportation is for our community's health and wellbeing," said Rod.

While demand has slowed since the strike ended, there is still a need for the Community Van for those with barriers to accessing public transportation. Clients may not live near a bus route or may be uncomfortable with public transportation due to health concerns, trauma or mobility barriers.

Growing Concerns

"We currently only have 3-4 volunteers which is the lowest we have been at in a while," said Alida.

Finding volunteers has been a challenge as the position requires all drivers to have a first aid certificate.

"Some people are interested in volunteering, but some are not interested or able to obtain

a first aid certificate which is around \$100,” said Alida.

Due to budget constraints, the program cannot cover the certificate's cost.

The program was at risk of closure due to funding running out in March during the beginning of the transit strike, however a generous anonymous donation has allowed them to continue running.

Volunteer Feature

Norm has been a volunteer driver for Community Van for over a year.

He first heard about the program after an Archway staff member came to his church to speak about the various programs offered to residents in Abbotsford.

“Since I’m retired, I was looking for a hands-on opportunity to give back to the community,” said Norm.

Norm volunteers three times a week for five hours a day which has allowed him to first-hand see the beneficial impact this program has had on residents in Abbotsford.

“Clients are very gracious and thankful that I am able to drive them anywhere they need. The variety of people I am

able to interact with on a daily basis has been a wonderful experience so far.”

Clients often share how meaningful the connections are to them.

“The volunteer drivers and staff at Archway take care of me like I am a family member! This ride program is helping me get on my feet again!” said KC.

Looking Ahead

“The anonymous donation allowed us to keep running during a critical time and gave us more time to search for reliable and sustainable funding,” said Alida.



Stock photo used to protect client privacy

“We’re not sure what the future looks for us when the funding runs out in the fall.”

In the meantime, Alida and her crew of volunteer drivers continue to help their community one ride and connection at a time. ■



Transit Strike Impact Stories

“I’m disabled and find it hard to walk, yet for three months, since I’m completely on my own here, I planned 45 minute walks each way to Sevenoaks to get groceries or do necessary errands, then recovered in bed for 3 days of rest because of the pain this caused.”

“I have spent hundreds of my already tight budget on taxis since the strike began. This often left me at the end of the month trying to figure out how to get by with no food for myself and my cat.”

- Abbotsford Senior

“As a newcomer, I like to do things by myself and be independent, for instance, to do my grocery shopping, visit church, or hang out with my friends. I feel that I have lost independence due to the bus strike.”

- Rosalba
Newcomer from Mexico

EMPLOYING PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY

Finding Purpose and Changing Lives:

Helping People With Diverse Abilities Find Meaningful Work

Lucas finishes his final week at Kal Tire Abbotsford

The stories of Lucas, Todd and Andrea serve as testaments to the transformative impact of Archway’s Employing People in the Community (EPIC) program. With the support of EPIC, these hard-working individuals have found meaningful work that provides them with purpose, independence and connection.

The EPIC program helps bridge the divide between people with diverse abilities looking for work and inclusive employers who recognize their unique talents.

Upon receiving referrals from Community Living BC, EPIC staff work with each individual to find a meaningful job that meets their vocational goals. This may include approaching employers and creating a customized position.

Employment Specialists provide assistance to both the individual and their employer throughout this process to create and sustain a successful employment experience.

“EPIC really helped me,” said Lucas, reflecting on the early days of his job hunt.

When Lucas first met Keith McKnight, his EPIC Employment Specialist, they worked together to understand Lucas’s interests and current skills. It wasn’t long before Lucas started working at a local nursery. It was a good job, however, Lucas wanted to find a job that was more stimulating as he wasn’t being challenged enough.

“That’s when he mentioned that he liked tires so I used my connection at Kal Tire to set him up with a job there,” said Keith.

Lucas has been working at Abbotsford’s Kal Tire for the past 14 months. Lucas’ job duties include checking product manifests for shipping and receiving, staging inventory, general cleaning, and taking care of showroom merchandising.

“Lucas is always punctual, very polite and positive, and always looking for additional tasks,” said Doug Bried the general manager at Kal Tire.

Doug’s approachable demeanor played a pivotal role in creating an environment where Lucas could thrive. Lucas felt at ease asking any questions with Doug’s open-door policy.

“If I have a tire question or a big rig question, Doug could always help me out,” said Lucas.

Lucas’s family recently made the decision to move to Edmonton and

Lucas inquired about relocating to the Edmonton branch of Kal Tire. With Doug's help, Lucas landed the position in the Edmonton branch, helping make the move a seamless transition for Lucas.

"My life has changed significantly because of this job. Without help from EPIC, I would not have found this job on my own."

"It's reassuring knowing that we don't have to worry about Lucas finding another job, he's all set up for our big move," said Lucas's mother.

Doug is confident that Lucas will excel in Edmonton and is grateful to the EPIC program and staff for their support throughout Lucas's employment at Kal Tire.

"The EPIC staff have always been very involved. There's always lots of communication and they gave me everything I needed to support Lucas," said Doug.

Another EPIC client who has excelled in the program is Todd.

Todd was laid off during the COVID-19 pandemic from his job at the Fraser



Andrea with her EPIC Employment Specialist Simren

Valley Animal Hospital. In 2022, Todd was referred to EPIC and Keith was able to get him his job back within a week of joining. Having a job for Todd is less about the money and more about the sense of purpose he gets.

"I like to work," said Todd.

At work, Todd takes care of mopping, vacuuming, dusting, cleaning windows, and taking out the garbage and recycling. Through his job, Todd has learned transferrable life skills like how to follow instructions, ask for help, and "be a good listener."

The Fraser Valley Animal Hospital has been a positive influence for Todd, as he excels in environments where he is given a routine. Being at the animal

hospital for over a year has given him the stability and structure he needs to embrace his work with enthusiasm.

Todd's mother, Colleen proudly states, "He really loves working and always wakes up a little bit earlier on days that he works. I don't think he's missed a single day over the last year."

Andrea is another EPIC client and works at the Abbotsford Entertainment Centre during events like hockey games and concerts and works as a Fan Experience Attendant in the Guest Services team. Her position is a great fit for her because she loves meeting new people.

"I was looking for a job to get an income and independence,

but also for a sense of community and connection," said Andrea.

Andrea tried looking for a job on her own before she was introduced to EPIC, but it was difficult for her to sustain employment.

"Without EPIC, it was hard. When you have a disability and you try to apply for jobs on your own, you're constantly told you're not good enough," said Andrea.

EPIC staff use the connections that they have with employers to match interested job seekers with inclusive employers who are willing to accommodate diverse abilities and help their employees be part of their team.

Andrea's Employment Specialist, Simren Thind used to accompany Andrea on the job site when she was first hired. Simren has seen a boost in confidence from Andrea since they've known each other for the past year.

"Andrea has grown a lot. She was very timid when I first started working with her, but now I see that she is much more confident speaking to people and has a positive outlook towards her employment and her life," said Simren.

Before she found this opportunity, Andrea couldn't imagine a life filled with purpose and she began to question the direction of her life's path.

"I've realized now that I used to be a negative person because I felt that I wasn't going anywhere in life, I was broke, I didn't have a job or any meaningful connections to people. I was very lonely. But now my life has changed significantly because of this job. Without help from EPIC, I would not have found this job on my own."

The journeys of Lucas, Todd, and Andrea are just a few of the success stories showing the long-term impact

of the EPIC program. EPIC staff are committed to helping their clients not only find jobs but also discover a sense of purpose, independence, and connection in their community.

EPIC's influence extends beyond their clients: it spreads to employers like Kal Tire, the Fraser Valley Animal Hospital, the Abbotsford Entertainment Centre and others who have embraced inclusivity and reaped the rewards of a diverse and dedicated workforce. ■



Todd with his EPIC Employment Specialist Keith



Xyótheméyth Agreement Signing



2SLGBTQIA+ Seniors Open House



Toys for Tots 2022



5 Year Work Anniversary Recognition



Sun Run 2023



25 Year Work Anniversary Recognition



Summer Admin Party



Inclusive Employer of the Year - Abbotsford Canucks



Seniors Field Trip to the Mennonite Heritage Museum



2022 Purple Lights Nights



Family Centre Staff at the Golf Tournament



RBC Donation to Urban Farm



Pink Shirt Day at Family Centre



Prospera Youth Angel Tree



Lunar New Year



Food Bank Staff on Orange Shirt Day



2023 Cultural Diversity Awards Recipients



Plasma Playoffs



2022 Community Builder Recipients



English Language Services Team



Halloween 2022



National Volunteer Appreciation Week



Archway Staff Hike



Bring Your Dog to Work Day



Foundry Skate Day with Canucks



International Women's Day Celebration



2023 Golf Tournament



Inclusive Employers Awards Organizing Committee



Christmas Gift Wrapping Booth



Halloween 2022



Supporting a Colleague with Cancer



Diwali 2022

Learning the Importance of Communication

This program has shown me how essential communication is in order to have a successful relationship with your spouse and children,” said Gurdeep*, one of the participants in the Archway Abby Dads program.

Abby Dads supports dads moving toward healthier relationships with their families through relationship-based training programs, as well as attachment parenting programming. Staff work with fathers, step-fathers, grandfathers and soon-to-be dads.

They run weekly drop-in groups and support dads in a range of issues, including parenting, intimate partner violence issues as well as teaching about importance of communication with spouses, children, and other family members. In addition to groups in English, there are Punjabi language offerings available. These groups allow fathers to connect with others with a shared language and cultural background.

Gurdeep first started attending Abby Dads programs in February 2023 with the encouragement of his

lawyer. He believed the programs might help his ongoing court case regarding a conflict with his spouse.

One of the services Gurdeep accessed is Chai Time. Chai Time is a drop-in program for Punjabi Dads where men are given the opportunity to talk about their hardships, relationships, parenting, and anything else they may wish to discuss.

Punjabi Language Father Support Supervisor Nam Aujla runs Chai Time on Tuesday nights and helps create a welcoming environment where dads can openly share about their situations and the related emotions.

Before attending the weekly support group, Gurdeep recalled that he was unaware that communication was the foundation of building a healthy relationship.

He related that from his personal experience that, “in our culture, they never teach us how to communicate.”

From both the support workers and other fathers, Gurdeep has learned the importance of making a conscious effort to have open conversations with his family.

He shared that he had implemented this practice into his daily life by sitting down at dinner and asking questions such as “how was your day?” or “what did you learn in school today?”

“You know there is a difference being made when children start to notice the changes as well. There have been times when kids have said ‘dad, you don’t get angry anymore,’ or ‘dad you have changed,’” said Nam.

“It’s not enough to tell somebody you are going to change; you have to show them to gain back their trust.”

Cultural Learning

Sharing new cultural norms are often part of the work done in the Abby Dads South Asian program; including the difference between laws in Canada and India.

Participants are used to handling most relationship issues individually and relate that they are occasionally surprised to learn about the laws and regulations regarding their situations.

“We sometimes have to explain why police are involved in what they would consider family matters,” said Nam.

For clients that have involvement with the Criminal Justice System, Abby Dads provides individual support, so they can move towards resolution. The first step to helping to make healthy changes is often helping fathers understand their reactions and how they can control their emotions.



Abby Dads Staff

“Ignorance isn’t an excuse, of course,” said Nam. “But when you haven’t seen healthy family dynamics demonstrated, it can be hard to know how to parent and partner any differently. We help unpack learned behaviors, coping mechanisms, and expectations so that the men can be supportive parents and partners.”

New Friendships

Since coming to the support groups, Gurdeep has also benefited from creating lasting relationships with other fathers.

“Sometimes the other dads come to my office, or we even go out for coffee or dinner. After our group is finished, we will all stand in the parking lot and just talk about things such as our court dates or just life in general,” said Gurdeep.

“With the close friendships these men have created with one another and similar life experiences, they are able to hold each other accountable,” said Nam.

It is almost impossible to be an outsider in the sense that they become

comfortable with one another, making it easier for them to talk to each other about their feelings and emotions.

“It has been eye opening to see men crying and being open about their feelings,” said Prav, a Punjabi Father Support Worker. “Seeing other people willing to be vulnerable helps the other participants feel comfortable opening up as well.”

Coming from a culture where men are often taught to suppress their feelings, the support groups can provide a positive emotional outlet for many of the fathers.

Culturally Relevant Counselling

In addition to the group sessions and individual support offered through Abby Dads, counselling is also often helpful. One of the biggest challenges is finding culturally relevant counselling in Punjabi for the fathers.

“Most men can communicate in English as well, but it is much easier to talk about difficult topics in your native language,” said Nam. No matter the language, counselling can also be prohibitively expensive.

Many fathers that attend the program are struggling to pay their rent or mortgage and provide for their families, so counselling can be out of the budget.

“If we were able help ease some of the costs of counselling, even a little bit, that would be so helpful,” said Prav.

Some clients with stronger English skills have been able to access free counselling through Archway’s short-term counselling program.

Hopes for the Future

Gurdeep would love to see Abby Dads implement a specific session that includes spouses, so that they are also able to learn about the importance of communication.

The support group has been life-changing for him and has shown him how crucial spending time with his family can be.

“It only makes sense to have your partner learn about these components as well, otherwise you have one parent saying one thing while the other said another thing,” said Gurdeep.

The support group has benefitted his relationship with his family, and he wishes more Punjabi fathers knew that support for them is available in the community through Archway’s Abby Dads program. ■



Visit Archway.ca/AbbyDads to see upcoming events and classes.

Abhitha's Life-Changing Year



Abhitha
presenting in class

Abhitha and her husband had always dreamed of moving to Canada from India for a better life and access to greater opportunities.

This dream became a reality when her then-fiancé obtained Canadian permanent residency status in 2020.

After their marriage in June 2022, she was able to join him in Abbotsford.



Abhitha has a Bachelor's degree in Education and a Master's in Chemistry which she used to teach high school science in Kerala, India.

After moving to Canada, Abhitha faced various struggles that came with being a non-native speaker.

"Communicating in English seemed like a huge obstacle for me, and it drained me of my confidence," said Abhitha.

She can still recall the various times she felt anxious and nervous when she struggled to understand those who were fluent in English.

After three months of living in Canada, Abhitha enrolled in Archway's Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) class, with the guidance of Work BC.

The LINC program provides support to newcomers, helping improve their reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills in English. The program covers topics such as becoming a citizen, Canadian culture, history, and geography.

"I overcame my barriers and am now confident enough to communicate publicly in English."

They also cover concepts such as working and living in Canada,

rights and freedoms, housing, employment, and education.

"My year in LINC was life changing," said Abhitha. "It was the safest place for me to practice speaking English without the fear of being wrong."

"The welcoming and lively environment, the passion of my instructor, the interesting topics, and the incredible classroom community created a supportive atmosphere that encouraged me to break free from my comfort zone."

As time went on, Abhitha grew to actively participate in discussions, present in front of her fellow classmates, and even lead activities.

"I overcame my barriers and am now confident enough to communicate publicly in English."

LINC not only helped Abhitha overcome her struggles with English, but they introduced her to community job fairs, financial supports for continued education, and Archway's Career Paths for Skilled Immigrants Program.

"Being part of a student's settlement journey is both an honour and privilege," said Sara, a LINC Instructor who taught Abhitha.

"Their courage, unwavering determination, and hard work have filled me with a deep sense of admiration and respect. Their resilience and invaluable contributions enrich Canada, making it a better place for all."

Moving Forward

Wanting to remain within the education profession, Abhitha applied for the

Education Assistant program offered by Kwantlen Polytechnic University.

"I am happy to share the wonderful news that I gained admission to the program. This achievement is a result of very hard work and the rich transformative experiences that I owe to my LINC Course," said Abhitha.

The LINC program was able to open doors for Abhitha to ensure she had the skills and confidence to thrive in the new country she called home.

"I am so thankful to Archway and the LINC class for giving me the opportunity to learn the language, the culture, and the confidence to pursue higher education. I am also grateful for the many friends I made during this journey." ■

DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Generations of Generosity

"I am a big believer that every single dollar means something when it goes to a good cause," shares Archway donor and supporter Ravi Dhaliwal.

Ravi's company, Central Valley Insurance, has been a long-term sponsor of the Archway Charity Golf Tournament and he has personally supported the Archway Food Bank and its Starfish Pack program.

"Archway is a lifeline in my eyes to the many vulnerable people in our community."

Ravi first learned about the work Archway does for the community through his friend,

Gary McCaskill, another long-term supporter and golf tournament organizing committee member.

"What Gary told me about the organization really resonated with me," said Ravi.

It also opened his eyes to the various areas of need within his community.

"Archway is a lifeline in my eyes to the many vulnerable people in our community. Their mission is to provide for the community in so many ways, whether it be a food bank for families unable to put food on their table, helping hands/ears to women dealing with domestic violence, they do it all," said Ravi.

The Starfish Pack Program

Ravi has three children and his six-year-old daughter Aariya wondered why some kids "got to go to school early and have breakfast."

He used her curiosity as an opportunity to teach her that some children were not getting enough food from home due to their living situation and/or financial strains their families faced.

"She understood what this meant and was glad they were getting breakfast," said Ravi.

In June, while picking his daughter up from school he was having a conversation about the school year coming to an end and Aariya brought up a question that left him at a loss for words.

"She asked how the kids will be able to get breakfast once the schools are closed," said Ravi.

In that moment he was unsure as to what to tell his daughter.



Central Valley Insurance Team at the 2023 Archway Charity Golf Tournament

"My daughter is emotional, so right away I could see her eyes starting to water in my rear-view mirror," said Ravi. "I told her I'd find out if there was something we could do."

As fate would have it, Ravi received an email from Archway's philanthropy team a week later asking for

donations for the Starfish Pack Program. The email highlighted the fact that the Starfish Pack ran over the summer months, so students will continue to have access to nutritious food in the summertime.



Ravi and his family
(Photo Credit: Ashley Bryce Photography)

"At that time, I knew it was a perfect opportunity to donate to a cause that really meant something to my daughter and myself," said Ravi.

The Starfish Pack Program was created after food bank staff heard that children were coming to school hungry on Mondays after not having access to school meals over the weekends. These students were more likely to have trouble focusing and experience behavioral or academic challenges.

"Starfish Packs are designed to ensure that food is accessible and within reach for children while in school," said Meghan Kellington, the Starfish Pack Coordinator.

Each week during the school year, volunteers pack two breakfasts, two lunches, two dinners and healthy snacks and deliver the backpacks to the participating schools in time for the weekend.

With the help of many local donors like Ravi, the program is now delivering more than 650 packs to 42 elementary, middle, and high schools throughout Abbotsford. Recognizing the same need over the summer as Aariya, the Summer Starfish program also ensures children, and their families have access to support during the summer.

Learning to Give

Ravi is a strong believer that your community is the reason for your success personally and professionally.

"This community took in my dad when he first migrated to Canada in 1980, and I was born and raised in this very community, so it played a part in raising me," said Ravi.



Children holding Starfish backpacks

Ravi is also grateful to the community for supporting his business.

"It's only fair that Central Valley Insurance gives back to that same community that has contributed

to its success in order to make it stronger," said Ravi.

He credits both his parents and religion for showing him the importance of giving back.

"My parents have always helped others in need and that definitely rubbed off on me as a child. My religion has also played a big part, as we are taught from a young age the importance of giving back to our community."

Like his father, he makes a conscious effort to keep his children aware of the struggles their neighbours face, with hopes it will make them appreciate what they have and foster a similar passion for giving to those in need.

"There will always be people who need help in some way and having these generations of generosity allows Archway to continue meeting the needs of our community," said Jennifer Willford, Archway Manager of Philanthropy. "We're so thankful for donors like Ravi who invest in their community." ■



The Starfish Backpack Program is working to address food insecurity, one child at a time, and you can help with a donation or volunteering.

Visit AbbotsfordFoodBank.com/Donate-StarfishPack

Success Stories

Brad's Story

Brad had enjoyed over 15 years of semi-retirement before changing circumstances forced him back into the job market.

The COVID pandemic had a negative impact on their finances so Brad and his wife, Joanne, began looking for work in 2021. Brad had a background in chiropractic care, while Joanne worked in the dental field. However, their prolonged absence from the professional world made it difficult for Brad to secure suitable employment in a management position, despite his experience and extensive education.



Brad in his office

Even though Brad had been writing cover letters for over a year, he was frustrated at receiving only four interviews for jobs that weren't aligned with his skill set.

Brad kept looking and was becoming increasingly desperate for a position. He ended up accepting a survival job at a deli counter, but it wasn't long before he realized that it wasn't the right fit for him. He respectfully apologized to his employer and left the position. That's when he came to the Archway Skills Training Results in Directed Education / Employment (STRIDE) program.

STRIDE helped him refine his cover letter and resume and opened his eyes to opportunities and job search avenues that he hadn't been aware of.

"Being semi-retired for so long, I became out of touch with how to apply for and find jobs. STRIDE gave me guidance on how to look for jobs in today's market," said Brad.

With an aging workforce and changing job market, programs like STRIDE provide valuable support and resources to help mature professionals navigate the job search process and secure meaningful employment. Through group classes and one-on-one training, STRIDE is bridging the gap between the experienced workforce and the job market's evolving needs.

"The STRIDE staff work to stay informed on current job trends, hiring practices, and what employers are looking for in a candidate," said Lea Langford, STRIDE program Employment Facilitator.

"We help our clients discover possible careers and then help them showcase their strengths to employers who would benefit from having mature and experienced professionals on their team."

"STRIDE gave me guidance on how to look for jobs in today's market."

STRIDE helped Brad to market his skillset during interviews and familiarized him with what is expected by hiring teams. He then began to receive interview requests with companies that sought out his management experience.

Brad eventually secured a position as a manager at a storage facility and successfully completed his probationary period, proving himself to be a valuable asset to the company.

After seeing the results of the program first-hand, Brad encouraged his wife to attend the STRIDE classes. STRIDE paid for upgrading courses which led Joanne to a job in bookkeeping.

"If it wasn't for STRIDE, I'd probably still be sitting in a chair writing cover letters the wrong way so I would not hesitate to send people to this program. I am grateful that Joanne and I found it and cannot say enough positive things about the program," said Brad. ■

Tammi's Story

Tammi was spending hours job searching after an extended employment gap but wasn't having any luck until she connected with the Archway Skills Training Results in Directed Education / Employment (STRIDE) program.

In 2019, Tammi's mom started to show signs of Alzheimer's disease and her dad could no longer help her mom. Since Tammi has a nursing background, she decided to move in with them to take care of her parents full-time for almost three years.



Gerry, Frank and Lea of the STRIDE Team

When Tammi was able to return to work in 2022, she was concerned that the extended gap in her resume would become an issue with employers. But she was honest about the gap and was able to find a job at a garage door company and eventually a nursing home. However, these jobs weren't the best fit and she was laid off just two weeks before Christmas.

When she started looking for work in January, she was discouraged

to find she wasn't getting called back for interviews.

"I would spend up to eight hours a day looking for and applying for jobs on the computer. But I wasn't hearing anything from employers. That's when I went to WorkBC for help and they referred me to the STRIDE program where I met Lea," said Tammi.

The STRIDE program supports 55+ job seekers in finding sustainable employment through skills training and employment support. STRIDE staff help clients explore occupations best suited to their strengths, interests, and transferable skills so they can make informed career decisions.

Older adults can face various issues when it comes to finding work including a lack of relevant skills or qualifications, difficulty adapting to new technology or being unfamiliar with current hiring practices. Older adults also have to combat age discrimination and employers who may view them as less productive or less willing to learn new skills.

Due to factors like these, older job seekers may experience longer periods of unemployment as was the case with Tammi. Often, the longer the unemployment period, the harder it is to get back into the workforce.

"Some older workers face health problems but can't afford to retire, so they want to find a job that's a good fit but have no idea what that looks like," said Lea Langford, STRIDE program Employment Facilitator.

"We help our clients discover possible careers and then help them showcase their strengths to employers who would benefit from having mature and experienced professionals on their team."

Tammi says that Lea was very helpful and always available to answer any questions she had.

"Lea and I just clicked immediately, and she helped me not only through the group classes, but one-on-one too."

Together they started making changes and eliminating resume information that wasn't necessary.

"I put a lot of my nursing skills on there because I was applying for admin work in medical offices. We ended up taking a lot of the nursing information off the resume, which I was really resistant to do at first because a lot of nursing involves admin work."

Although Tammi found it difficult to remove the nursing experience from her resume, when she did, she noticed the phone calls started to come in.

Tammi was amazed at how many interview requests she was receiving. After interviewing with a few companies, she accepted a position in administration for a trucking company.

"It's a great place to work because of their commitment to their employees' physical health and wellbeing."

Tammi enjoys a "wonderful and fun break" every day with a friendly competition spring toss game and finds the work fulfilling.

Overall, Tammi was very happy with the STRIDE program.

"It's an awesome program. It really is. It helps you with everything you need to do to find a job. It's just a wonderful program and I would recommend it to any older job seekers." ■

NEW BEGINNINGS DAYCARE

Affordable Childcare Revolution:

The Impact of \$10 a Day Childcare on Working Families

Staff members Jessica, Lisa, and Nicole

"It was a huge relief to know that they wouldn't have to sacrifice one of their salaries just to pay for childcare."

New Beginnings is more than just a daycare to Carly. It is a support system that allowed her to go back to work and provide for her family without worrying about the high costs of childcare or the quality of care.

Since becoming Abbotsford's first \$10 a Day ChildCareBC Program site for children under the age of three in April 2022, New Beginnings daycare has helped reduce the financial strain on families.

Carly needed to go back to work after her maternity leave, but as a mom with three young children, childcare seemed too expensive to become a reality. That was until she heard about the New Beginnings childcare facility.

"Archway's New Beginning \$10 a day program has helped us make the decision for me to go back to work after maternity leave. It saves us time and money due to the fact that food is provided, and the activities and care they provide to the children is exceptional," said Carly.

Carly formed a bond with the staff, who she felt truly cared about her children and their well-being. She loved hearing about the activities they did each day, from arts and crafts to outdoor adventures. New Beginnings wasn't just a daycare; it was a place where her children could learn and grow.



"We highly recommend New Beginnings and have loved our experience with the amazing staff since day one," said Carly.

"At New Beginnings, our open-door policy warmly welcomes parents and grants them unrestricted access to the program," said Maria Cagnelli, Archway's Manager of Early Years & Family Supports.

"This caring and supportive approach encourages meaningful interactions between our staff and parents, allowing us to work closely together in supporting each child's development."

Since 1990, Abbotsford's New Beginnings has been known as a leader in working with parents of young children. It provides part-time and full-time programs for parents to complete or upgrade their education. It also offers childcare for parents who are not enrolled in the New Beginnings Young Parent program.

Anita is another parent whose transition back to work has been made easier by the \$10 A Day ChildCareBC Program.



After their second child, Anita needed to get back into the workforce to supplement her husband's income. But with two children needing full-time care, she and her husband were worried about the financial strain that childcare would put on their family, especially after an already tough financial period.

"A few months before our first was due, the pandemic started and my husband was laid off so for the next six months we relied only on my Employment Insurance. Then we had our second child sooner than expected, so I was home for almost three years in a row. Going back to work after such a long time and needing childcare for two children was financially and emotionally stressful," said Anita.

"We highly recommend New Beginnings and have loved our experience with the amazing staff since day one."

When they heard about New Beginnings, it was a huge relief to know that they wouldn't have to sacrifice one of their salaries just to pay for childcare. The program gave them the freedom to pursue and grow in their careers.

"The \$10/day program is a huge help and made the transition back to work so much easier. We don't have to worry about having two large bills coming in at the end of each month," said Anita.



Staff members Stephanie, Maria and Bailey

"We just finished our first year as a \$10 A Day ChildCareBC Program site and it's been amazing to see how transformative it has been in making childcare more accessible for families," said Maria. "It's so important for families to have access to high-quality, inclusive and affordable childcare for the wellbeing of the children and their parents."

Anita knew her children were in good hands and that their children were getting the care and attention they deserved. Anita cannot say enough good things about the New Beginnings program.

"We value the care that the staff provide, the health-forward meal planning, and the focus on play and outdoor activities. So, thank you for making my first year back to work so awesome!" ■

\$10 A Day ChildCareBC Programs are made possible by funding from the Province of British Columbia, specifically the Ministry of Education and Child Care. This story is not intended to speak on behalf of the Province.

Setting Youth Up for Success

It felt like having a family where you hadn't had one before," shared Darren* a youth who stayed at Archway Autumn House a few years ago.

Since 2010, 141 youth in care like Darren have found a home at Autumn House, a program of the Archway Youth Resource Centre (YRC). Youth live semi-independently in an apartment building with Youth Workers located on-site.

"This program is more than just housing," said Anthony, a Youth Worker with the program.

Over the span of six to twelve months, youth are provided support in areas such as mental and

physical health, building healthy relationships, daily living, personal management skills, navigating substance abuse, and much more.

Independent living skills are taught ranging from grocery shopping and cleaning to helping youth apply for university and file their taxes.

"We're teaching independent living skills and also supporting everything else that goes on in a young person's life," said Mandy, a Youth Worker at Autumn House.

"The situations that lead youth to be living alone are complex," said Anthony. "In some cases, there are mental health or substance use issues on the parent or youth side which makes living together unsafe."

"Some of the youth have been in care most of their life and this is a step to transitioning out of care."

Youth are referred to Autumn House by the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) or Xyólhéméylh (Fraser Valley Aboriginal Children and Family Services Society).

Youth who live at Autumn House have been screened to assess their ability

to live semi-independently. They must have the ability to establish and follow through with goals as well as engage with support staff.

Independent living skills are taught ranging from simple tasks such as grocery shopping and cleaning to more complex tasks such as helping youth apply for university and file their taxes.

The program helps youth grow and build their confidence, which enables them to go out and live their life on their own one day.

The program also helps youth feel cared for, which is an emotion that many are feeling for the first time in their life.

"Every child needs a supportive adult in their life who is also there to hold their hand," said Mandy.

Amanda's Story

Amanda* moved into Autumn House in 2022, after her mom lost housing.

"I didn't have anywhere to live, so I got to move in here," said Amanda, now 18 years old.

Over the past year, she has been grateful for the support and living skills she has been able to learn from Youth Workers like Mandy.

Apart from life skills such as cooking and keeping her apartment clean, she has learned how to build healthy relationships and support herself.

Going to high school and living on your own isn't easy but one thing is for sure, Amanda can confidently say she would not be in the place she is today without Autumn House.

Challenges

Supporting up to nine youth at a time can be challenging with just two full-time youth workers.

"Imagine trying to parent nine youth with complex issues, trauma and needs," said Mandy.

Anthony and Mandy are available Monday to Friday during regular working hours and there are mentors living on site who support the youth after 5pm on

While the work is challenging, Mandy and Anthony are encouraged by the small and big successes the youth experience while living at Autumn House.

"We have had youth come in at the beginning who have a lot of issues and unhealthy relationships, but at the end of the nine months they have grown and learned how to establish boundaries for themselves," said Mandy.

supports young adults over 19 who were formerly in care.

"Our connection doesn't end the day the youth move out," said Mandy. "Our goal is to set youth up for success as they approach adulthood and we often connect them to other supports at Archway so they're not navigating life alone."

"Every child needs a supportive adult in their life who is also there to hold their hand."

In the past, there was limited support for youth in care after turning 19, which contributed to high rates of homelessness, incarceration and mental health disorders.

Former youth in care now have access to Youth Workers, housing support and free tuition at BC public institutions. MCFD's Agreement for Young Adults (AYA) also offers significant support to former youth in care.

"Youth used to have to become an adult overnight on their 19th birthday," said Simone Maassen, Archway Manager of Youth and Health Services.

"Nowadays there is a lot more support which gives them a chance to build a strong foundation for their adult life." ■



Mandy and Anthony preparing for a BBQ at Autumn House

weekdays and on weekends. The staff mostly work one-to-one with youth, but also plan social activities to give the youth a sense of community.

"It's a unique way to grow up, so having other youth with similar life experiences living next door allows them to support each other," said Anthony.

After Autumn House

After their time at Autumn House, youth move out into housing in the community. Many of the youth are then supported through other YRC services, including Independent Living Support services. One YRC program called Bridges specifically



Mandy preparing food for a BBQ at Autumn House

Celebrating a Decade of Empowering Abbotsford Seniors

In the heart of Abbotsford, the Better at Home program has been quietly supporting and empowering independence for seniors over the past decade.

Archway's Better at Home program helps seniors remain in their own homes by providing home-support services at a reduced cost. Friendly visits, transportation, light yard work, minor home repairs, light housekeeping and grocery shopping are some of the services offered by program volunteers, staff, and contractors.

The cost of the service is based on a sliding scale which is determined by the income level of each senior in the program, making services accessible for low-income seniors.



Better at Home services have been available to Abbotsford seniors since 2013, when Archway was awarded the Better at Home contract in Abbotsford.

"I feel like I am standing on my own two feet for the first time in my life because of Better at Home."

Abbotsford was one of the first 18 sites selected for the Better at Home program which is now available in 260 communities across BC. The funding comes from the BC Ministry of Health and is administered by United Way British Columbia.

Karen Kenny has been the program coordinator since inception and has been working in the Archway Senior Services department for 24 years.

"The demand for services has been steadily increasing as the population ages and as the cost of living continues to go up," reflected Karen.

To serve as many seniors as possible, each household can access cleaning and yardwork services once a month at their subsidized rate. Seniors can request additional hours, but would need to pay the full rate, which many of them cannot afford.

"There's not a whole lot that somebody can do in two hours a month, but everything that they do is something I don't have to do, so I just appreciate everything that they do," said Yvonne, a Better at Home client since 2016.

At 76 years old, Yvonne can live independently in her home with the support of Better at Home. A friend recommended the program when she was going through a difficult time when her husband of 43 years passed away.

"My husband had Alzheimer's, so it was a full-time job taking care of him. I was in a pretty difficult spot, to be quite honest," said Yvonne.

Yvonne cannot say enough good things about the program.

"The staff are all absolutely wonderful. I feel so safe and they're so friendly and just an absolute pleasure. It's nice getting to know them too, I know about their children and I enjoy striking up conversations with them; they're just very caring."

The Better at Home program also has a team of hardworking volunteers that graciously contributed over 426 hours in 2022; these volunteers help pick up and deliver groceries and provide rides to and from appointments.

"The volunteers help fill in the gaps and are so dedicated to making sure no one is aging on their own," said Karen.

Ruth was referred to Better at Home by a friend in 2017 after she

had recently lost her husband. Her husband had dementia which made it difficult to care for him. He lived in a nursing home for 14 months before he passed away which incurred significant costs.

"I was left with a sizeable mortgage after my husband died, so I had to downsize to a condo from a townhome," shared Ruth. Now at the age of 86, Ruth is grateful for the light housekeeping which



helps her to live independently. Ruth uses a walking cane and has arthritis which makes keeping her condo clean a challenge.

"I feel like I should do more, but when you're in pain all the time it's not that easy, so it's very nice to have help. I get a reduced rate on the cleaning fees and she does an awesome job," exclaimed Ruth.

Emerging as a more confident and independent woman, Ruth ecstatically shared how Better at Home has changed her life.

"I feel like I am standing on my own two feet for the first time in my life because of Better at Home; I can make

my own decisions about stuff and I can always ask for help," said Ruth.

In addition to direct services, Karen connects seniors with other programs within Archway and in the community.

"If we notice that a senior is socially isolated, we'll encourage them to attend the weekly Lunch with the Bunch gathering. We can also arrange for Food Bank hamper deliveries, Meals on Wheels or transportation through our Community Van," said Karen.

Seniors also receive resources like heat preparation information, invites to local events and Valentine's cards from local schools.

"Many of our clients aren't very connected to technology so mailing them resources and checking in over the phone helps them stay connected to their community," said Karen.

Karen builds relationships with her clients and if the housekeepers notice any concerns they let her know so she can check in with the senior.

Clients' adult children often relay how relieved they are to know that their parents are getting the help they need to live a dignified life in their own homes.

Better at Home has supported more than 900 seniors with accessible, affordable and quality services since 2013.

"Over the years, the services offered have remained the same, but some services were modified during the COVID-19 pandemic

to meet health and safety regulations," reflected Karen.

Better at Home replaced house visits with telephone check-ins and adapted services to be delivered online where possible.

COVID and the recent transit strike further isolated seniors, especially those with less family support and financial resources.

"To understand how vulnerable our seniors are, I'm seeing more and more seniors in our program that are 70% to 100% subsidized which speaks to their limited income," said Karen.

With 170 seniors currently enrolled in the program, about three quarters of these seniors get at least 70% of their costs subsidized.

Karen and the Senior Services team are advocating for more funding to increase the service hours available as current funding only allows for a two-hour shift a month for each service.

"We know that if seniors could get one more shift subsidized, they would take it. By the time we return to someone's place four weeks later, the condition may be above and beyond light housekeeping, especially if the senior is unable to maintain household cleaning due to physical limitations," said Karen.

While there is always more that can be done, Karen is grateful to play a part in supporting seniors in living independently.

"Our goal is to foster healthy and positive aging and being able to remain in their own home is often the best-case scenario for senior's mental and physical health." ■



From Afghanistan to Canada:

KHESRAW'S JOURNEY OF RESILIENCE AND HOPE

In the midst of uncertainty in Afghanistan, where the Taliban's resurgence has cast a shadow over the hopes and dreams of countless individuals, there are stories of resilience and hope. Among these stories is that of Khesraw, an Afghan refugee whose life took an unexpected turn when Afghanistan's government was overthrown by the Taliban in 2021.

Khesraw and his family are from the city of Kabul. They had a normal life in Afghanistan – his three kids were doing well in school, his wife, Mitra, worked as a biology teacher, and Khesraw worked as a medical doctor.

All of that changed in 2021, when Khesraw had to make the tough decision to leave his country to secure a safer and brighter future for his children.

"Before Taliban, Mitra and I never thought one day that we will leave Afghanistan, becoming refugees. I had a lot of plans to serve the people of my home country," said Khesraw.

Khesraw was in the middle of seeking approval through the Afghanistan government to open a rehabilitation center to help people experiencing paralysis. However, the disintegration of the Afghan government put a stop to Khesraw's dreams; there was no one to process business licenses and visas or to provide other government services in Afghanistan.

Khesraw stayed in Afghanistan for a month and a half until he finally received the opportunity to go to a refugee camp in Abu Dhabi after receiving sponsorship to come to the United States. Khesraw and his family stayed in Abu Dhabi for an entire year. Making the best of their new situation, Khesraw volunteered to teach English to people in the refugee camp and Mitra volunteered as a seamstress.

Khesraw was sponsored by a previous supervisor to come to the United States; however, Khesraw thought Canada would be best for him and his family.



Khesraw and Mitra
enjoying nature

"I preferred Canada because it is multicultural and I see opportunities for my children's future," said Khesraw.

When they first arrived, Khesraw and his family were housed in a temporary hotel for Afghan refugees where they were connected to Archway's Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) and their Afghan Settlement Worker Mary Ahmadi.

Through RAP, Archway welcomed 433 government-assisted Afghanistan refugees from April 2022 to August 2023, as well as 90 refugees from Syria, Sudan, Congo and the Central Republic of Africa.

"I am feeling safe and happy in Canada. I am strong."

RAP works with refugees in the initial weeks to meet their immediate needs around health care, life skills, banking, filling out essential paperwork and forms as well as connecting them to other settlement services and community resources.

After the refugees graduate from RAP, they are transferred to the Pathways to Integration Services department which assists thousands of refugees, immigrants, temporary foreign workers, permanent residents and international students each year.

As a settlement worker, Mary supports Khesraw's family with their basic needs and also provides emotional support and connection.

"When they've lost almost everything they've built and they've been separated from their loved ones, it causes a lot of emotional trauma," said Mary.

Mary connected Khesraw and Mitra with Archway services like Language Instruction for Newcomers, the Archway Food Bank, and Career Paths for Skilled Immigrants. Archway's Immigrant Youth program helped get their children ready for school and get them to and from after-school programs.

"Archway Community Services helped and supported my family. We didn't know anything about this new culture and new country when we first arrived," said Khesraw.

Some of the biggest challenges Afghan newcomers experience are the language and communication barriers, transportation, and obtaining gainful employment. They may also experience difficulty adapting from a male-dominated society.

Mary works hard to instill a transformative mindset among Afghan women, encouraging their active participation when they come to Canada. When working with groups of Afghan refugees being temporarily housed in a hotel, she organized family events for them, making sure that the women understood that their presence and engagement are valued.

Having been in Canada since September 2022, Khesraw envisions a future firmly rooted in Canada where he aspires to become certified to practice as a doctor. He recognizes the pressing need for dedicated healthcare professionals, having experienced first-hand the difficulty of finding a family doctor for his own loved ones.

"I can become a doctor here, not for myself, but I can help society too," said Khesraw.

Mitra also hopes to develop her career in Canada and plans to become a teacher like she was in Afghanistan.



Khesraw's family at home

For now, Khesraw has joined Archway in the role of RAP Housing Liaison where he helps newcomer families find permanent housing. He loves working for the organization that has provided him with so much support and enjoys connecting with other newcomer families in Abbotsford. His ability to relate to the struggles of these families and support them in their native language makes him an invaluable asset to the Archway team.

Despite the hardships and uncertainties Khesraw and Mitra have faced, their unwavering resilience shines through. By embracing the opportunities Canada offers, Khesraw is determined to rebuild his life, pursue his dreams, and contribute to society.

"I am feeling safe and happy in Canada. I am strong." ■



Visit [Archway.ca/Refugees](https://www.archway.ca/Refugees) to learn how you can help by volunteering, donating or renting to newcomers.

Volunteer Stories

Ghadeer

Food Bank Volunteer

Ghadeer joined the volunteer team in the summer of 2019 when the Archway Food Bank started their Fresh Food Recovery program – a program that recovers fresh food from local grocery stores every morning.

"I landed in Canada in October 2018, so I was a newcomer when I joined the food bank. I wanted to join a place that serves newcomers and vulnerable people."

Ghadeer loves giving back to the community and mentions how volunteering has helped prepare her for employment.



"It has helped me with my self-esteem and confidence when interacting with other volunteers and employees."

"We're so grateful for all that Ghadeer brings to the team," said Rebecca Thuro, Food Bank Program Supervisor.

"Volunteering is a great opportunity to meet people from all walks of life."

"With the help of volunteers like her, we are able to process and equitably distribute food to over 4,500 individuals each month."

"She's the biggest sweetheart, offers great advice and creates a warm work environment," said John Dunning, Fresh Food Recovery Coordinator.

Ghadeer speaks Arabic and has helped translate between clients

and staff. She's also offered insight into how the Food Bank can better meet the dietary requirements of their Arabic-speaking clients.

"Having volunteers from different backgrounds, with diverse abilities and various life experiences strengthens our ability to address food insecurity in Abbotsford and be more welcoming to all. Ghadeer inspires us to reach out of our

comfort zones, extend the hand of friendship and invites others to do the same," said Rebecca.

Ghadeer sees the value in volunteering, not just for clients, but for volunteers too! She says it's important for volunteers to be flexible and keep an open mind.

"Volunteering is a great opportunity to meet people from all walks of life." ■



Louise

Meals on Wheels Volunteer

Louise began her volunteer journey by bringing her dog Chloe to the hospital to meet patients.

"I would always dress my dog up in different clothes and the patients would light up when Chloe and I visited them," said Louise.

"In many ways, Louise is a one-woman force for food security in Abbotsford."

The joy that Chloe was able to bring inspired Louise to broaden her horizons. She began volunteering with the Archway Meals on Wheels program seven years ago with Chloe alongside for the ride.

Louise now volunteers in the community of Abbotsford seven days a week, including three days a week with Meals on Wheels. Using food donations from Save-On Foods, she prepares meals to give out to marginalized individuals including youth, seniors and those living on the street. She works with local organizations such as Union Gospel Mission, Salvation Army, and Cedar Outreach who help distribute the prepared meals.

"Louise makes 100s of sandwiches every day for the marginalized populations in Abbotsford. I can't imagine what the community would do without her," said Meredith Lee Sperling, Archway's Volunteer Coordinator.

When Louise personally delivers the sandwiches to those living on the streets, she sees how appreciative they are. "It motivates me to keep on going when they are happy to see me."

Louise was recognized for her tireless community work with an Archway Community Builder's Award in 2022.

Natalia Deros, Archway Senior Services Supervisor, introduced Burns at the awards ceremony and shared, "In many ways, Louise is a one-woman force for food security in Abbotsford. She is gifted at creating partnerships with organizations and

businesses in Abbotsford. People can't help but be inspired by her enthusiasm for the equitable access of all to good nutritious food."

"I am just wanting to give back to the community, to help people that can use a helping hand with food. I have been very blessed and feel that this is a little way that I can help," shared Louise. ■





Stories of people helping people