

COMMUNITY LIVING
St. Marys & Area

OUR STORY
Who we are and what we do

This is our commitment to the community of St. Marys and to citizens who have a developmental disability.

OUR STORY

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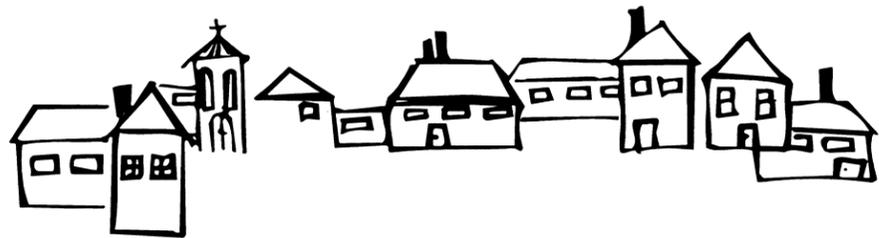
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Welcome to our story

We are pleased to share our stories and information about Community Living St. Marys and Area in this booklet.

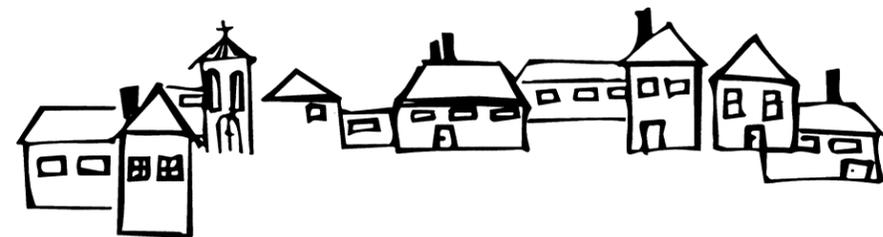
We are proud of the work of our Association and our part in creating a community that welcomes all of its citizens; a community where everyone belongs.

We also learn from others in our community about how we can encourage and support the contribution of each and every citizen. Our communities are richer and healthier when we work together.

We love talking about our Association. We invite you to read through this booklet and please call, email or visit us to chat.

Thank you!

Members of the Board of Directors
April 2015



Terry moved to **St. Marys** not only because family is here. It also has a great reputation as a small town. It is nestled on the Thames River, has lots of community services and is not far from larger centres.

Terry learned about Community Living St. Marys and Area when Bob, an older brother, saw it on the town's website.

How interesting... an agency whose vision is a community where **everyone belongs**.

Did Terry ever make the right decision moving to our town!

What we believe...



What we Believe

What we Believe

Our vision is simple: *A community where everyone belongs.*

And we do mean **everyone**.

We are committed to the people of St. Marys, including those of us who have a developmental disability, to help build a community where everyone belongs.

We know this means we have to work hard. We have to act. So we also have some principles about how we'll act. You can read them all on our website or ask us for a copy—we're proud of our principles and love to share them!

www.communitylivingstmarys.ca

We know all people have the right to make their own decisions.

We know that all people need family and friends.

We see it as our job to take direction from the people using our services. Sometimes that involves their family and friends.

We believe that being involved in your community leads to full citizenship. That's why we don't create or operate segregated and congregated supports.

What we Believe

We know we have to help the people and organizations of St. Marys to welcome people with developmental disabilities.

That's why we not only have a vision, but a mission statement:

Our Mission:

To nurture the ability and willingness in our community to welcome and support all people as valued and contributing citizens.



“The bottom line is that we believe everything we do must start with the person who is using our services.”

Our Principles

Principle # 1

We believe everything starts with the person.

- We will help people plan for their good life
- All supports are tailor made together with the person and their family
- All budgets are individualized
- We will advocate for the Ontario government to individualize funding for disability supports

Principle # 2

We believe we are accountable to the person first while honouring relationships in the person's life

- We will support the individual's right to call on family and friends for support and advocacy throughout his or her life
- We will support families to be active decision-makers in the lives of their children and youth

Principle # 3

We believe that a range of relationships are valuable and important to everyone.

- We will support people to explore and develop those relationships through intentional and natural opportunities

Principle # 4

We believe everybody has the right to self-determination.

- We will support people to be full citizens of their community
- We will support people to direct and monitor their services and budget
- We will support People First

Principle # 5

We believe that inclusive communities are created and strengthened by recognizing and acting on the belief that each person has unique gifts that are necessary contributions.

- We will help people discover their gifts, abilities and skills
- We will help people use/share/contribute their gifts

Principle # 6

We believe in our commitment to people with developmental disabilities from St. Marys and area.

- We will walk with people through their journey
- We will find ways to support people currently not supported
- We will have a clear, transparent, equitable process for how decisions are made regarding who receives what service (including the allocation of funds, existing and new, human resources and assignments)

Principle # 7

We believe that being involved in your community leads to full citizenship.

- We will create inclusive supports
- We will not create or operate segregated and congregated supports

Principle # 8

We believe we have a role in grassroots community development.

- We will support people who use our service, families, Board members and staff at every level to lead and take part in community initiatives

What we Believe

Principle # 8 (con't)

- We will support self advocacy
- We will support family advocacy

Principle # 9

We believe it's important to plan for future needs of people living in our community.

- We see our role as an agent of change in the areas of education, seniors, transportation, housing, recreation and employment
- We will advocate for individual and system change to help people get supports they need

Principle # 10

We believe in an organizational culture that encourages learning, risking, evolving and innovating.

- We will learn together by continuing to question ourselves and each other
- We will stay connected to movements within human services including citizenship, human rights, advocacy and best practices
- We will share information and stories – team-to-team, general staff, newsletter and newspaper

Principle # 11

We believe in the honourable role that staff play in people's lives.

- We will recognize and appreciate staff, encourage leadership and mentoring opportunities, invest in training, and advocate for good wages, benefits and employment opportunities

What we Believe

Principle # 12

We believe in planning that is separate and local and also, we believe there is a role for independent, unencumbered planning in Ontario's developmental service system.

- We will explore issues of further separating planning from services
- We will continue to act as a provincial resource while balancing local needs

Principle # 13

We believe that our organization is healthier when there is an active quality assurance process in place in every area of the organization.

- We will regularly ask people who use our service and their families about the quality of services they receive



Terry met some people pretty quickly in town by visiting the library.

One conversation in particular was quite interesting. It was with a long-time St. Marys resident who had been on the Board of Directors of Community Living St. Marys for many years.

What a **remarkable history** the agency has! It was unlike most in Ontario when it decided to only offer individualized supports and not have group homes.

The agency has been through lots of changes. But people have stayed true to their vision of creating a community where everyone belongs.

How we got here...



Our History

In the 1950s, families were gathering in towns across the country. This was also true in St. Marys. They met for mutual support and to share their ideas and desires for their children with a disability, young and old. Parents and civic-minded community members wanted something different than institutions. That was the only support available to people with disabilities.

In 1962, our Association in St. Marys became official. We took a name that was acceptable at that time: Association for Retarded Children. Our focus was on employment, education and housing. Parents with the Association wanted their kids to have opportunities.

For many years, the only support offered by the association was a sheltered workshop. In the late 1970s, Association volunteers recognized that people with disabilities living on their own needed some support.

They also realized that some people needed a chance to move out of their family home. We began to support people in their homes as well as the sheltered workshop.

What's In a Name

1962—St. Marys and District Association for Retarded Children

1968—St. Marys Association for the Mentally Retarded

1981—St. Marys and District Association for the Mentally Retarded

1986—St. Marys and District Association for Community Development *(never became official because the government did not grant approval)*

1988—St. Marys and District Association for Community Living

2001—Community Living St. Marys and Area



It's About Human Rights

Supporting the self-advocacy movement has been a cornerstone of our Association.

1982—People First leader David Lincoln visits St. Marys and a local People First Chapter forms.

1985—People First members attended People First provincial conference.

1984-1987—"Quality is..." project in St. Marys led to many leaders in the disability movement coming to St. Marys.

1987—Canadian Human Rights Commissioner presented at our 25th anniversary meeting.

1985—Citizen Advocacy in St. Marys was founded.

In the mid-1970s, the large institutions were beginning to downsize. In the early 1980s, our board of directors put an ad in local papers **looking for people from our community who were living in these institutions.** They offered families help to plan for their sons and daughters to come back to St. Marys.

Our Board members also visited organizations that had more supports and services than we did. They wanted to learn how best to support people. They also wanted to learn what *not* to do.

It was on one of these visits to an agency with group homes that a board member said she was unclear how this group home idea worked. As she had four children, she knew how challenging it was for family to get along. She was really puzzled how strangers who didn't choose to live together could possibly get along. This laid the foundation for a **different way of thinking.**

Our History

We welcomed home several people who had lived for a long time in institutions. There was a severe shortage of affordable and accessible housing in town so we created a housing company, William Hanly Apartments Incorporated. With some help from the government, we bought some multi-unit buildings. We made some units accessible for people who use wheelchairs.

In 1983, we began to really think about our vision and what our organization should look like. In 1986 we decided that we wanted **all of our services to be individualized**. We no longer wanted to offer a service where people with disabilities had to spend their time together just because it was the only support offered.

December 9, 1990 was a big day. We ended the way we provided supports at that time and **started fresh**. We no longer provided 'programs'. Instead, staff were hired to work for a specific person as part of a team. Very often that person or a family member was part of the interview process to choose the staff.

It's About Community Development

1984—Received funding to help St. Marys Day Nursery welcome all kids.

1986—Worked with St. Marys Public Library and Board of Education to create a community literacy program.

1987—Partnered in developing St. Marys Mobility Service.

1990—Partnered in opening first housing co-operative in St. Marys.

1992—Supported development of the employment service, Partners in Employment.

2001—Developed Voices, training for people to speak up about what's important in their lives.

2003—Partnered with Create a Smile Foundation in fundraising.

2006—Published *Home Sweet Home*, a booklet about making home ownership a reality.

Our History

Since that time, people have received **support in a way that makes sense** to them for their day. So the same support worker could help someone get ready in the morning, then assist at their volunteer position, and later on, help them to prepare a meal.

We also saw how important it was to have separate staff for people who want **help to plan** for things important in their lives.

The end of offering programs was a pivotal point in our organization. It pushed away the idea that people who use our services are 'clients'. We recognized that **we are all citizens** of the St. Marys area. The person who uses our services and their family are at the centre of decision making about their services.

The change was successful because people believed in our vision...heck, they were part of creating it! Being part of this innovative and creative team with strong values is very powerful and **leads us into our future**.

2006—Mandatory training for all staff in People First session: *How I Want to be Treated*.

It's About Partners

2009—Parents in Perth

2010—Facile: Independent Facilitation in Perth

2010—Accessible Playground

2010—Accessibility items for Pyramid Recreation Centre

2010—Youth 4 Inclusion

At church one Sunday, Terry and Bob were talking with others about how hard it is to make decisions about your future. Someone said they worked for Community Living St. Marys and Area. Bob wondered how the organization **helps people plan.**

The church member said, "Sometimes people want help to think about their **dreams** and different choices they have. It's really about being there if people would like help to figure out what they want in life and how to get it."

Well, that made sense. Bob thought about people who communicate in different ways and how helpful that would be.

We help people plan their future...



Planning Services

We believe good **planning is important to creating a good life**. All of us want this good life. Some of us set goals privately and some of us want help to think about our futures. That's why we have staff who are there if people want help to think about what a good life looks like for them.

We call our staff who do this Planning Facilitators. They spend time with people in many situations, for example:

- during a cross-roads or time of transition such as a young person leaving school;
- when someone is moving to a new home or looking for a new home;
- when someone is experiencing a crisis in life;
- when someone is wanting a change in life such as a new job or roommate;
- when someone wants to connect to new friends and activities;
- when someone wants others to listen and hear their choices and wishes.

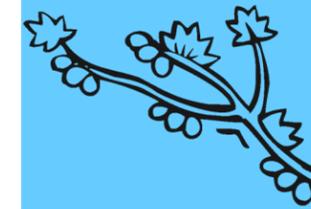
Of course helping people plan is only the first step. Good planning leads to action. So we also work in the community to build opportunities that will create a more welcoming place for all people.

How we work together

We meet with the person, and often family members, and work together to develop a customized plan. There is no 'prescription' for the plan. It is personal and unique. It includes the actions that will be needed to create the good life described in planning.

Planning is a way for people with disabilities to use their voices (whether they talk with words or not). Some people are used to others making decisions for them. Planning is a way for people to gain confidence and experience in making choices and directing their own lives.

We work with anyone in St. Marys and area who has a developmental disability and who wants help to plan. Families may ask on behalf of their family member if the person is unable to make the request. We can help people who live outside of our area find a Planning Facilitator near them.



*"I feel like people
are finally listening
to me."*

Terry and Bob heard about the planning services at Community Living St. Marys and Area. But they wondered what happened if you needed daily help to do things.

Bob saw an employment ad in the local newspaper for support workers. He read that support workers **help people with disabilities in many ways.**

Bob was impressed with the focus on giving people the support they need to be part of their community. He said to Terry that the association really is committed to helping people belong.

We have great support workers...



Support Services

Support Workers have an important job. We:

- support people to bring their personal plan to life by helping with **the actions** needed;
- **honour the relationships** people have and help people build more relationships;
- support and **honour the choices** people make.

How We Work

Support Workers are responsible to people who use our services. We provide the support the person's plan says is needed.

People who use our services are part of the hiring team to choose their workers.

We do not offer day programs or other congregated services. That's because each person decides what he or she wants to be doing daily. Our Support Workers help make that happen. This requires a welcoming community that provides opportunities from all people.

This may include support to:

- meet others in the community;
- join clubs or groups (supporting people to get to know others);
- use community services, such as the library or recreational facilities;

- get ready for the day, which may include support for complex medical needs;
- manage personal finances;
- make meals and tidy-up;
- find and keep jobs and volunteer work;
- explore personal interests;
- learn things people need or want to know to have a good life.

We do not have group homes. Each person chooses what is best. That means someone might choose to:

- live alone;
- live with a supportive roommate (another member of the community who provides some support);
- live with someone else who uses support services;
- live with a supportive couple or family (we call this Share Your Home).

The costs of the supports are in each person's **individualized budget**, which is mostly funded by the government.



"Community Living St. Marys has provided our family hope for our son's future. He is part of the community and is surrounded by his trusted circle of friends."

Support Services

How We Work with Families

We honour relationships people have with families. We know that while staff have an important and valued role, we do not replace the need for family and friends.

Families are involved in the lives of many people who use our services. Their knowledge and history may help to design services needed. Families may also be a part of the hiring process when choosing workers.

While we honour the involvement of family in a person's life, we see our accountability first and foremost to the person who uses our services.

How We Work with Employees

We have about 60 full and part-time Support Workers. They may work for one or more people.

Team Leaders co-ordinate the hiring and training of Support Workers. We believe people with disabilities can be good co-supervisors of staff with the right help. Team Leaders help with this. They also work with the person who uses our services and the family to ensure people are receiving the supports they need.

New employees take part in a two-day agency orientation. They also do an in-depth orientation with the people they work for.

Support Services

Support Services work for people in many ways. We:

- help develop a team of support for people who use our services;
- provide ongoing support to employees;
- provide an emergency support line which is available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

Of course we follow the laws, like the Human Rights Code and Employment Standards Act. But we also follow our own Best Practices. This says how we want to support and nurture the great Support Workers and staff that we have!

And we also...

Some people have **direct funding** and want **self-employed workers**. These are support workers who don't work for Community Living St. Marys and Area—they are self-employed.

In these situations we can help people and their families set up contracts with those workers. We can also help people manage their budgets. We do not have any role in supervising the workers.

Terry's new neighbours dropped by for a welcome visit. Over muffins and tea they shared what they loved most about St. Marys.

They also mentioned that they are retired and their children have moved out. But they said a young woman with a disability has lived with them for almost two years now.

They proudly talked about the **Share Your Home** arrangement. They got involved when they heard Community Living St. Marys was looking for interested families.

After hearing their story, Terry definitely felt like St. Marys was a welcoming community.

We help people live together...



Share Your Home

We know that not everyone wants to live on their own. Some people want to live with a family or other member of the community.

Our Share your Home staff help people **explore different living options** such as:

- moving in with a welcoming family;
- having a supportive neighbour (someone who lives close by and provides some support);
- sharing a home with a supportive roommate (another member of the community who provides some support).

As the name says, Share Your Home is opening your door and welcoming someone into your home and your family's life. To share your place and space, spending time together, sharing meals, chores and leisure time like all families do.

It may be an individual, a couple, or a whole family who welcomes someone into their life.

It's an opportunity for people with disabilities to be part of a family's day-to-day activities; grocery shopping, visiting at the local coffee shop, running errands, catching the local game, visiting friends and family. It's an opportunity for families to enrich their lives by welcoming a new person with new perspectives and experiences.

Share your Home is sharing life, **a life rich with people, real relationships and community.**

Sharing your home may be welcoming someone with a disability for occasional or regular weekend visits. Or it may be welcoming someone to live with you full time.

People interested in sharing their home will spend time getting to know someone and making sure everyone is comfortable before any decisions are made.



"Sharing life is a real joy. It is fun and rewarding."

Terry and Bob had learned so much about Community Living St. Marys and Area in such a short time.

One thing surprising was how the agency has **individual budgets** for each person who uses their service.

Bob thought that was a lot of budgets to manage. He was reminded by the church member who worked for the association that it was all part of their commitment to support each person individually.

Each person has a support budget...



Individualized Budgets

Each person has a budget that outlines the money that is to be spent on providing support. It includes everything related to the service the person is using from the association.

This is different from the money people receive from ODSP (Ontario Disability Support Program). That monthly money helps pay for things like rent and groceries. It is not used to pay for supports.

For each support budget, we have a standard budget form. We can change it to whatever the person and/or the family needs to be able to understand it. We keep accurate records of funding and expenses for each person.

Every month we produce statements of each person's expenses. They include:

- **Employee Expense:** This includes hours of support. It also includes vacation time, training and meetings. The government requires payroll taxes be paid for each employee and these costs appear as benefits.

- **Alternative Supports:** This includes the fees of independent contractors and any support activity that is not covered by employee expenses. Independent contractors are self employed

Support Workers. They are responsible for reporting to the government all their income and expenses and must pay their own taxes.

- **Where You Live:** Someone may have costs in this section that relate to a supportive neighbour, supportive roommate or Share Your Home family. This may include honorariums for providing some support to the person, such as helping the person during the night if needed.
- **Travel:** This includes any staff mileage, parking fees and flat rates paid while working for someone.
- **Other Considerations:** This is anything specific to the person. For example, it might include:
 - specialized equipment repairs and maintenance;
 - extraordinary personal products;
 - community participation fees (in some cases);
 - medication not covered by other sources;
 - allowance for worker expenses and any expenses from team meetings.



"We've always believed it's important for each person to have their own budget. It would be more difficult for the system to take money away from a person than it would be from a program."

Terry didn't know much about business, but Bob had worked in business for a long time. He knew what it takes to keep things running. He figured it was no different at Community Living St. Marys and Area.

He told Terry that an agency that is so focused on providing individualized services must have a pretty **good administration** team.

**How we run the day-to-day
business...**



Central Administration

Central Administration is often called the “hub” of the association.

Some of the things we do include:

- work with the Board of Directors, people who use our services and staff to set a vision and direction for the Association;
- make sure all the business activities of the Association are done well;
- handle everything to do with finances, like funding that comes in from the government and money that goes out to pay staff and other bills;
- provide information and reports to many different committees and groups as needed;
- link with provincial groups who do similar work.

Central Administration looks after the business of the Association.



Budget Lingo You Will Hear

Alternate Source Funding: The difference between the cost of the individual's direct support and the available funding.

Annualized Funding: Funding that you get each and every year (not just one time funding).

AROHS: Adult Respite Out of Home Support program for individuals over 18. It is funded by the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services.

CIHS: Children's In Home Support program for individuals under 18 who live at home. It is funded by the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services.

CSS or CAS: Community Access Support program for anyone over 18 to access community activities. It is funded by the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services.

Fiscal Funding: Funding that you get one year that you won't get the next year.

Fiscal Year: Our fiscal year begins April 1 and ends March 31.

Income Statement: The summary of what it costs to provide supports each month. It includes expenses paid out for direct support and any revenues that came from sources outside of our agency. This might include Foundations funding or Special Services at Home (SSAH). Donations cannot legally be applied to a specific individual. An income statement is available at any time.

Identified Funding: The money available to support an individual.

MCSS: Ministry of Community & Social Services

Overhead or Infrastructure: The buildings, heat, hydro, water, insurance, desks, office supplies as well as the staff who do not work directly with people receiving support.

Passport Program: Program for young adults typically leaving school and needing support to get involved in their community. It is funded by the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services.

SIL: Supported Independent Living program for individuals over 18 living on their own. It is funded by the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services.

Terry and Bob were convinced that getting involved with Community Living St. Marys and Area would be a great way to get to know the community.

They got memberships and went to the Annual General Meeting where they met even more people.

It was clear that Terry made a good move coming to St. Marys—a community where everyone belongs!

Yes, we need members and donations!



Fundraising, Membership and Donations

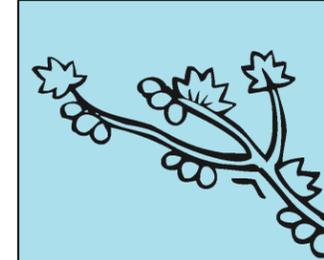
Fundraising: Like most community agencies, we rely on the generosity of our community. We receive funding from the Ontario government. But it doesn't cover all the things people need to live a good life in our community. We have different fundraising efforts and are always looking for volunteers to help out!

Donations: The Association accepts donations at any time. A tax receipt is written for any amount someone is generous enough to donate. You can donate to our Association online at www.canadahelps.org.

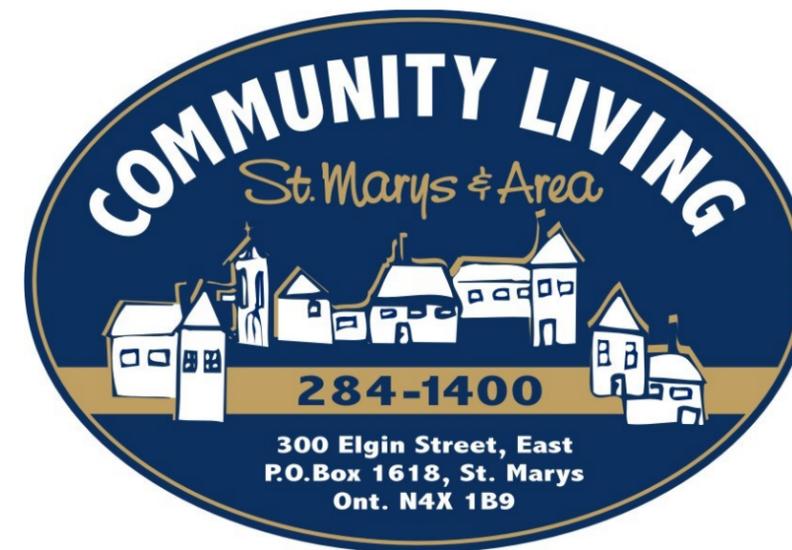
Memberships: A membership entitles you to:

- vote on policies and bylaw changes at our Annual General Meeting;
- receive our newsletters, annual reports, financial statements;
- receive invitations to planning retreats and workshops;
- serve on our Board of Directors or one of its committees;
- a receipt for income tax purposes.

Now where else are you going to get that many perks and power for \$5?



"I feel it's important to donate, both a bit of my time and a bit of my money. The Association is helping create the kind of community I want to raise my children in."



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Many people contributed to the creation of "Our Story." Many thanks to the planning committee: Laura Cannon, Vickie Logan, Marg McLean, and Kim Monden. Special appreciation to Barb Leavitt who provided her expert skills in writing, editing, and creative design. Thanks to all!

This Story First Told: March 2011