

50th Anniversary

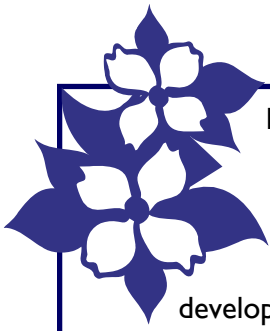


Celebrating
50 yrs

With Personal Stories
from the Past to the
Present

"I know there is strength in the differences between us.
I know there is comfort, where we overlap."

Ani DiFranco



Fifty years ago a small group of dedicated people from St. Marys and the surrounding area made a decision that has changed the course of history for this community. These people were parents and friends of young people with developmental disabilities who decided that their children would not be committed to a life in some provincially operated institution. Rather, they said to themselves and our community, our children will live and grow in our own community where they will become productive and loved citizens.

In fifty years the name of the organization that was established to accomplish that goal has changed several times to become, Community Living St. Marys & Area. Those young people have grown up and lived with us or moved on to other communities where normal circumstances have taken them. The successes of our association coupled with the work of other associations across the province in integrating people with developmental disabilities into typical community life has led to the closing of all of the provincial institutions. People who had been sentenced to live and die in institutions have come to live in communities of their choice, often their home communities. Wow, great news eh!

The news gets better. As much as the lives of people with developmental disabilities have improved we have seen even more dramatic improvements in our community life. Having a child with a disability was once very challenging, a source of shame to a family, a taboo subject of conversation. Now we think and believe differently. We owe our thanks to all of you people with disabilities who have chosen to live with us. You have taught us a lot about taking extra time to listen and accept and cultivate differences. You have taught us that no sensitive issues that impact on our lives are taboo. None in our community more than you have led us to discuss other important, but once taboo issues, such as accessibility to all services, cancer, bullying and sexual orientation.

Take this little booklet as reminder of the celebration of our first fifty years. Hopefully the pictures and stories will bring your own stories and memories to mind. You have all played your part in this fifty year journey. Enjoy this book and thanks so much for the contributions you have made.

By Allan Slater



I joined the association as a volunteer in 1974. I helped at the workshop on Ingersoll Street where there were only two employees. How things have changed since then.

Al Bennett was the manager then and Joan Lang did everything else.

I taught several people to swim in the Rumbles indoor pool and assisted where needed at the shop.

Picnic tables were a big success then, however, as we lacked space inside, they had to be assembled and finished outdoors. Needless to say, we had to have good weather, so we were excited when we were able to move to the present site with help from the Kinsmen Club, the Ministry and generous citizens. Our next challenge was to develop the capability to provide assistance to those needing a residence and support there. I feel that our decision to not look at a group home as a solution was a huge step in the culture of the association.

When deinstitutionalization came along, we were able to bring everyone from our community home to a new life. I think that was our most important accomplishment as a very small organization.

Along the way, we began to serve many more people and so our staffing needs grew as well. We have managed to assemble a stellar group of people who do their very best to help people live a rewarding life as part of this community.

This is a challenge that changes as time goes by, and so the dedication of the organization to excellent training for both staff and volunteers has been very important.

Over the years, Quality Assurance has played a major role in developing a system that lets us know if we are doing what we say we are doing.

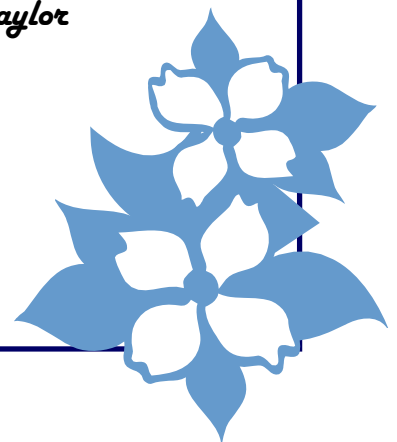
We have never been afraid to do things differently than other associations, and hopefully we have been right in our choices rather than not. The culture of providing services to people in a way that is what they want and need is not easy, and we must be constantly on guard against complacency.



It has been a great pleasure for me to be a part of this great organization. I have worked alongside some marvellous people and I am proud of what we have managed to do so far.

I can only imagine what is going to be accomplished in the next 50 years.

By Barb Taylor



Humble Beginnings, the Early Years

The St. Marys Association for Retarded Children was certified on July 7, 1962 and chartered in October of that year. Mr. W.R. Kirk, executive director of the Ontario Association for Retarded Children, arrived in St. Marys to present the charter and explained to citizens what the provincial organization tried to do in Canada and what the local organization could strive to do in St. Marys and district.

Jesse McKillop, first president of the association, chaired the meeting at St. James Parish Hall. Other charter members were Elizabeth Hanly, Helen Crosby, Frances Blackmore, Shirley Hackney, Carl Schaefer, Vera Courtnage, Charles Hall, Cliff Waters and Betty Bell.

Ms. McKillop worked hard with other community members to form the association and fill a gap in the community. Betty Hanly said there was support of family members before the association was formed, but little else. "A lot of people hid them," she said of trying times. "A lot of people didn't want to recognize them." William and Betty Hanly drove to London every other week to attend meetings at Princess Pat School. For three years in the early 1950's, Ms. Hanly took her son, Brian, to the Children's Psychiatric Research Institute in London each Monday so he could learn to walk and talk. Mrs. McKillop, the mother of a 'handicapped' child, was involved in a Hamilton organization for developmentally challenged people before moving to St. Marys. "It was a lucky day the day Jessie McKillop came to St. Marys," Ms. Hanly said of her friend.

The St. Marys Association for Retarded Children began seven years after the Hanly's son moved to an institution in Orillia.

Two years after charter, the St. Marys and District Occupational Training Centre was organized for developmentally handicapped adults. Originally at the town's public library, it moved to the (former) Friendship Centre, and, after that, the town's (former) post office.

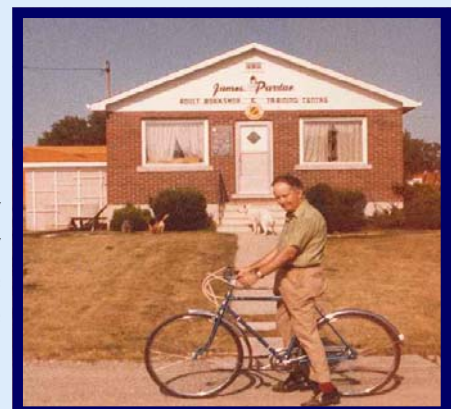
Stanley Crinklaw was director of the centre. "It is apparent that the new centre will perform a much needed function by filling a great gap in the lives of handicapped persons," the St. Marys Journal Argus published in October, 1964.

The James Purdue Adult Workshop and Training Centre opened in 1967.

The Ingersoll Street facility was named for a Kinsman and planning committee member. James Purdue died before completion of the project. Tom Watt donated the land and the Kinsman played a big part in the workshop completion.

The association got a name change in 1968, becoming the St. Marys Association for the Mentally Retarded (the 'and district' tag was added 13 years after that).

In 1973, the James Purdue Centre closed after a Stratford company hired all of its workers. That was short-lived however. Within a few months, the company folded and St. Marys residents working there attended a workshop in Stratford. In 1974, the James Purdue Centre reopened and grants from the federal government allowed for development of new programs and new staff.



The new \$200,000 James Purdue Centre on the corner of Elgin and James Streets, its current location, opened in November, 1978. Some 30 adults were employed via industrial contract work. Among the guests were Vera Purdue, mother of the late James Purdue, association president Barbara Osborne and St. Marys mayor Clifton Brown. The town purchased the property that formerly housed a cold-storage plant, for \$13,000 and sold the land to the association for \$1.

Another major milestone, the apartment support program, began in 1980. The association bought a building on Queen Street West in 1982 then purchased the Park Street apartments for \$35,000 the following year. Renovation costs on Park Street cost another \$110,000.

At capacity, Park Street could accommodate seven people in three two-bedroom units and a one-bedroom unit. A former Mormon meeting house, four tenants moved into Park Street. That group, originally from St. Marys, moved here after the Bluewater Regional Centre in Goderich closed.

The government of the time said it felt institutions should be scaled down because they were too expensive. Staff at the facilities were afraid of losing their jobs and tried to convince parents that returning to the community was a bad idea. There was concern community placements would not be permanent.

“Our association is over 20 years old, and has a strong and well-established foundation,” then executive director Bud Carter said of the housing issue. “Our commitment to these people is founded on the principle that they should have the opportunity to (enjoy) a lifestyle that approximates normal family life in the community of their choice.”

A five-year plan to close six institutions meant as many as nine people with ‘mental retardation’ may be moving into the community, wrote association employee Kathleen Flanagan.

“We feel people can learn the skills that will allow them to participate in and add to the community,” said former association board president Barb Taylor.

“There is nothing magic about institutions,” Carter said. “There’s nothing that can be done in institutions that can’t be done in the community. Mental retardation is not an illness to be treated in a hospital setting. The people residing there have few human rights.”

Carter said the cost per-person in an institution was \$100 per-person, per-day. Community program costs in St. Marys then averaged about \$30, factoring in apartment settings and including rent costs. Under Carter’s leadership, the organization became the St. Marys and District Association for Community Development, part of a trend away from labelling people by their ‘handicaps’ and in reflection of a new goal. Originally established to provide a framework for developmentally ‘handicapped’ people to work, the association (now) places more emphasis on instigating integration into the community, Carter told the St. Marys Journal Argus.

Sandra Gregory, a resident of the William Hanly apartments and worker at the James Purdue Centre, said she was glad to leave the Southwestern Regional Centre in Cedar Springs.

“It was good to come out of there, to be closer to my family and I don’t have to use my wheelchair and walker anymore,” she said.

It's About Partners

2008—Life History Project at the Friendship Centre

2009—St. Marys Storytelling

2009—Parents in Perth

2010—Facile: Independent Facilitation in Perth

2010—Accessible Playground

2010—Accessibility items for Pyramid Recreation Centre

2010—Youth 4 Inclusion

In the '80s, we held a number of large planning retreats for everyone connected to the association. We had open discussions about power and who held the power. We had a shared vision and we worked together to make that vision a reality! 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. We wanted all of our services to be individualized.

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.

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

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.

2008—Focus on Core Gifts

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 was hired to work for a specific person as part of a team.

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. The person who uses our services and their family are at the centre of decision making.

Today in 2012, our focus continues to be on people and community development. We continue to learn more about personal planning and facilitation, creating services to respond to individuals, and quality assurance. We continue to build capacity and invest in our community.

Our Vision: A community where everyone belongs.

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

Principles that guide our work...

We believe everything starts with the person.

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

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

We believe everybody has the right to self-determination.

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

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

We believe we have a role in grassroots community development.

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

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

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

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

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



I began working for Community Living St. Marys in December 1986. My first role was called, "apartment support worker" and I was working part-time. Staff either worked residentially to support people in their homes or vocationally at the sheltered workshop, woodshop or supported employment program. I took on all the hours I could get and did a maternity leave in a Co-ordinator's role that ended up becoming full-time. Co-ordinator's had a mixed role of both supervision and planning. At that time our office space was in the little grey building on Church St. In 1990 when the agency shifted its structure to reflect our person-centred values, I became a Facilitator and supported people who were planning changes in their life. It was a memorable time with all employees being laid off one day and rehired the next on teams around a person. It was exciting and scary all at once and I felt the same way when the workshop closed and there were other times too. It wasn't easy and not everyone was always in agreement but it was worth it in the end to do the right hard things. That's how this Association gained a reputation as being a risk-taker and not settling for the easy way out.

What I have enjoyed most are the people connected to this association and the stories. Some of those people have passed away now but I know some of their stories and can still keep their memories alive. People like Tom Aspen, Brian Selves, John Waters, Murray Vanstone, Bill Grantham, Ken Harris, Art Bennett, Winnie Rule and others were unofficial leaders in the Association. They taught me so much but with amazing patience and humour. What I learned really had nothing to do with disabilities and working in this field it was about what it means to be human with each other and how to build community together. Those learnings have served me well. I have also felt privileged to get to know so many wonderful families. My memories include a cast of co-workers, volunteers and committee members who have inspired me and shared the challenging times. Surprisingly a lot of those people are still connected to this Association! What a great place to work!

I've also felt very lucky to be able to work in the community I live in. Over the years I have been part of many committees and projects that Community Living supported. St. Marys would not be the same place without this support and yet it has been offered in quiet ways that didn't demand attention. Some examples of this are the Day Care centre, Adult Literacy, Transportation, local schools etc. The Association has always had a strong voice in our county and in the province as well. Collaboration has been one of the strongest assets of this organization. It always amazes me to walk into a room of a hundred people at a conference and find that everyone knows about little St. Marys.

My career at Community Living St. Marys has only seen half of the 50 years we are celebrating and I can't believe the amount of change that has happened in that time. It's true change is the only thing you can count on in this life but in the years ahead I hope we can also count on the values we hold dear and our belief in people. If an organization can have a soul, this one does! Congratulations Community Living St. Marys and Area!!!





Our son Thomas has been involved with Community Living St. Marys since he was nine years old.

After a meeting my wife attended where many agencies were sharing information on what they had to offer, I remember her saying, "They thanked me for approaching them so early, as

most people show up with young adults just finishing school, or aging parents who can no longer care for their adult children at home anymore."

It wasn't long after this meeting that my wife and I became members of the association."

My wife has been a member of the board of directors ever since.

As life became more difficult for Thomas through his early teens, various types of support were made available to us. By the time Thomas turned 16, it became apparent that we needed to look at some other options for Thomas.

Community Living offered us an opportunity to have Thomas share a home and supports with another young man. We thought it was a good opportunity for all of us. As things don't always go as planned, after only six weeks it was obvious that these two people were not compatible. Thomas was moved into the Rotary Respite House in Stratford until they found a small house that Thomas could rent with full time support.

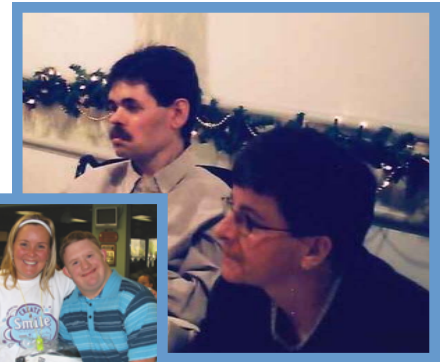
The association is always looking out for the individuals' best interests.

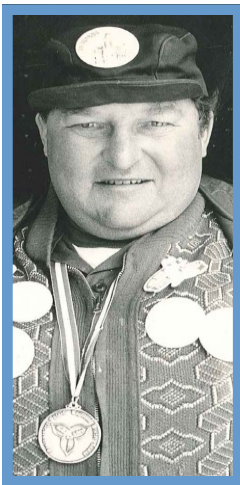
Community Living has always been there for our son. It has not been an easy journey for any of us, including Thomas, but he has finished high school and is living on his own with full time support. His support staff over the years have been amazing. Many of them have become more than just staff to Thomas and his parents.

Thomas is a comical, likeable young man once you get to know him. He has changed a lot of lives with his abilities, despite his disabilities.

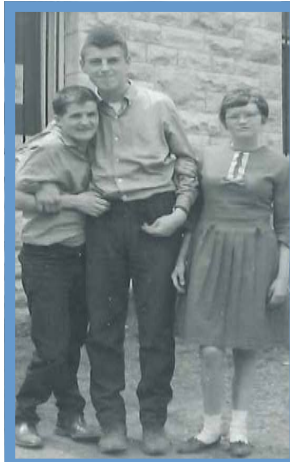
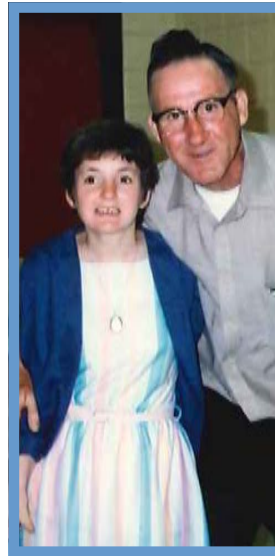
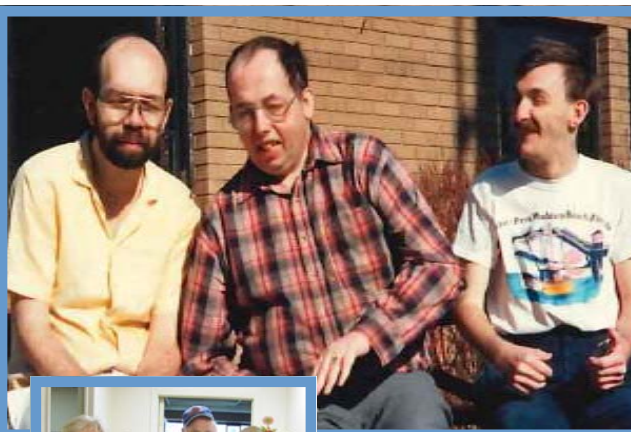
As Thomas has recently turned 22, we would like to thank Community Living for being his link to his community.

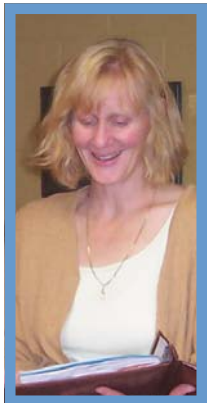
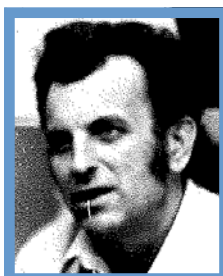
Congratulations on doing a great job for fifty years. Your model of support has been greatly appreciated and as we look to the future we feel our son will be well looked after, when we as parents are gone.

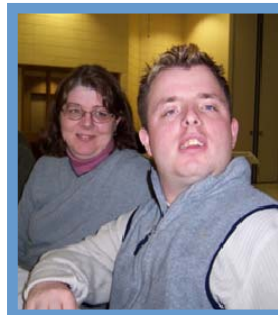




"I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples." Mother Teresa







Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the World—Indeed it's the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead

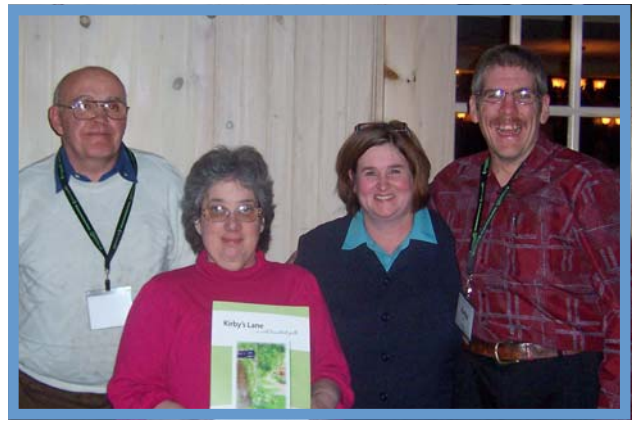
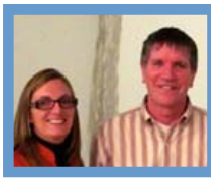
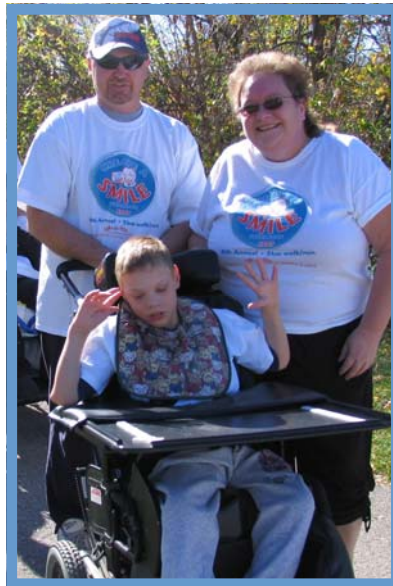




"Where there is love there is life."

Mahatma Gandhi





Some of my earliest memories of the Association are of listening to my parents and Bill and Betty Hanly talk about the new workshop while Brian and I watched them play euchre; my dad eating butter tarts that had been made at JPC; mom volunteering; going to youth group meetings; Murray telling stories; doing a placement in the new 'SIL' program; having a great time in Florida with Jack and others; attending a People First conference in Gananoque with Sandy and others; meetings at the King Edward; staying at the Palmers cottage; doing Kids on the Block puppet shows at local schools; crumbling stinky blue cheese; participating in retreats and learning from some great leaders of the movement including people like Peter Park, John O'Brien, Marsha Forrest; visiting Bill at the institution and feeling so good when he finally got moved back home to St. Marys.

Today, the association supports some 55 people and their families to live good lives in their communities. Approximately 75 people are employed in part-time and full-time positions. The annual budget is about \$3.3 million.

Even with this growth and the many environmental changes, the culture of the association has remained one of being person-centred, innovative, focused on quality and grounded in community.

I have always felt privileged to spend time with people connected with our association and the movement. We can feel proud of our past and our present while looking forward to our future.

Congratulations!

By Marg McLean

