



CONNECTING OUR COMMUNITY

A Madawaska Valley Association For Community Living Publication
19491 Opeongo Ln. Barry's Bay ON
(613) 756-3817

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Christmas Celebrations - Thank you Andrea!



Imagine our delight when we received a call in mid-November from local donut diva, Andrea Budarick, sharing her thoughts about providing a Christmas dinner for people at MVACL. Andrea sells her delicious donuts at area farmers markets throughout the season. Not everyone wants to purchase a half or full dozen, so she asks people to make a donation to her “Donuts for Charity” jar. Boy do these donations add up.

Barry’s Bay resident, Joe Laderoute has frequented Budarick’s market stand for many years and has become one of her helpers. They have developed a true friendship. It was this friendship this friendship that inspired Andrea to reach out. She wanted to help Joe and others with a special Christmas celebration. This year she chose to use her donation funds to provide the most amazing dinner for people supported and staff at MVACL.

Smiles lit up the room, as people entered the legion space that was generously donated for this event. Mike Poliquin from the legion outdid himself setting up and decorating the room for the festivities. Shortly after people arrived, Andrea came with a piping hot feast that exceeded any expectations. Santa delivered gifts for all participants of the Secret Santa. There was much excitement as people went up to receive their gifts. Everyone left happy and since the party, many have commented that this was the best Christmas celebration at MVACL ever.



Walter & Lavina with Santa



Thank you to Rose,
Jane and Leah for
your help serving the
delicious meal



Tracey, Courtney, Genny, Amanda, Sarah and Mack enjoying the festivities



Look at those smiles.....Tom, Richard, Orpha and Dean are all excited to visit with Santa

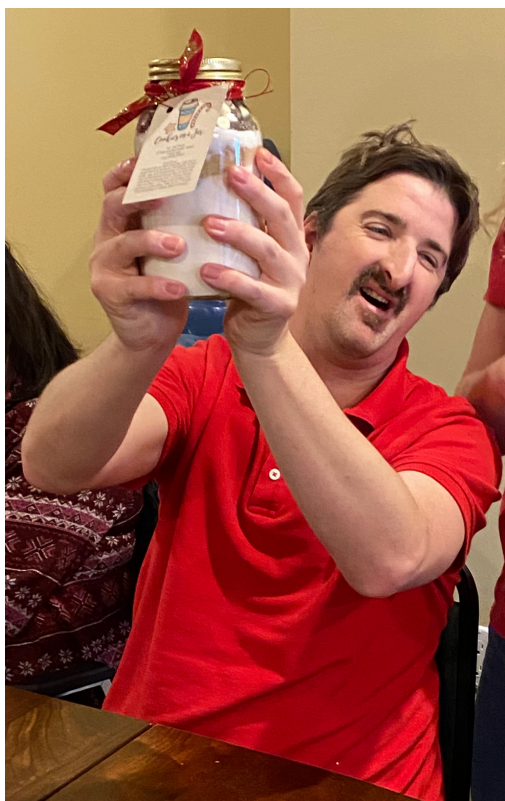


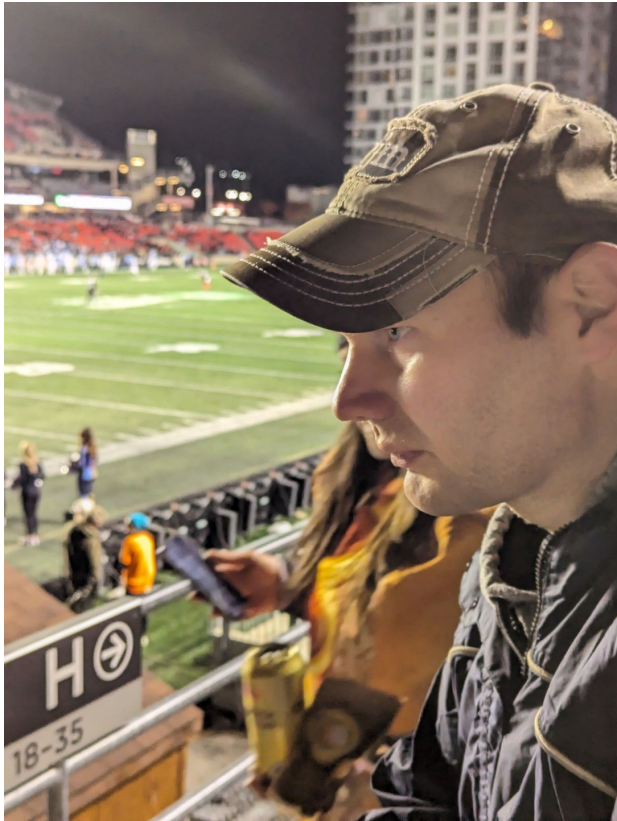


HIGHLIGHTS



December brought the opportunity to make crafts and do some baking with our friends. Jess, Kelly, Larry, Matthew, Angie, Jane, Melanie, Amanda and Lori all enjoyed the day's activities.





FOOTBALL FUN

Lisa, Dean and Tom were so happy to be able to attend an Ottawa Redblack's game. Big thanks go out to Chris Hofley who graciously donated the tickets. Because of his kindness, many unforgettable memories were made. They brought joy and unity to the people we support. His commitment to inclusivity mirrors our mission and the support plays a vital role in making our vision a reality.



Hello MVACL family, my name is Miranda Hogan, and you may see me around Barry's Bay and surrounding communities walking the streets with Lisa, a woman I support. I recently finished the Developmental Service Worker diploma program through Loyalist College in Bancroft.

When I was hired in 2019, I had only completed a few courses and was totally green when stepping into the field of human services. I started in the RC weekend position and have moved around to a few schedules and locations; at the time I didn't realize how much this change would help me grow and connect with people as a co-worker, student, mom, partner, and friend.

Working with humans with disabilities both intellectual and physical has helped me be more outgoing, fun, and compassionate to people's differences and most importantly it has helped me be mindful and present in the personal relationships I hold.

If I think about the last 4 years working at MVACL and learning how to communicate and understand people that communicate in a non-traditional sense I really feel like I haven't worked at all! Other than we all work a lot!! One of my favourite quotes I have read that really does sum up the job for me is by Dave Hingsburger- a leader in the field of developmental services.

“Being in human services is cool because, in essence, you are paid to be human. Paid to explore the commonalities of the human condition. Paid to discover the incredible diversity of the human spirit. Paid to spend the day doing something that matters; something that makes a difference. Something that you are proud of.”

“Done right, you have chosen both a job and a passion. Both a passion and a mission. Both a mission and a purpose. There are those who spend their lives looking for a purpose. You will rise to it each morning. And that's a hell of a way to start the day.”





Community Living Ontario has initiated a campaign to petition the government for increases to our base funding. In the past 30 years, Developmental Services have received only a meager 3.9% increase to this funding, while the consumer price index has risen 60%. This poses a real threat to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

This letter campaign is a demand for the government to increase base funding to agencies by 5% immediately. We ask that you open this link and sign your name to this petition. It will take only a few minutes.

https://communitylivingontario.ca/what-we-do/advocacy-education-awareness/five-to-survive-campaign/?utm_source=elorafergustoday.com&utm_campaign=elorafergustoday.com%3A%20outbound&utm_medium=referral/

Alternatively, go to our website & under “Latest News” click on #5ToSurvive Campaign.

Please help up make a difference.

For more information, please watch this 1.25 minute clip. <https://fb.watch/pk95yxUsap/>



CHANGES TO THE MEMBERS OF THE MVACL TEAM

ALI BIERNASKIE



Welcome back Ali!



MELANIE PLEBON



After 18 years of service, Leslie Reis is moving on to new adventures! We are ever grateful to Leslie for her support, knowledge and dedication to MVACL and most specifically our finance department. Leslie will be leaving us the end of April, providing us with much appreciated notice to allow time for a smooth transition. We wish Leslie safe & happy travels along her next journey. Most of all have an absolute ton of fun!!

Lea

Congratulations are in order for Lea, who will become our new Finance LEAD, taking on many of Leslie's duties.



Kelly N

Congratulation to Kelly who was the successful candidate for the Independent Facilatator position (IFP). This position will include Planning, Passports and Programming. Stay tuned for more information in the very near future.



HR Happenings

Hi everyone,

I would like to start off by saying how much I enjoy working at MVACL. The interactions I have had with people has been great. Thank you for welcoming me into the MVACL team!

Over the years, working in the DS sector, I have learned that communication is the biggest tool we can use. Something that is particularly important to me is building relationships, knowing how others like to receive information, how to approach the person, really knowing the person and the best way to provide support.

We all know times have changed over the years, with how we communicate. Whether it be face to face, phone call, text message, email, digital meeting platforms, social media and so on. It can be hard to guess what each person's preferences are unless we ask. So, I have included some tips below that I hope will help in becoming an effective communicator

**Communication - the
human connection -
is the key to personal
and career success.**

Paul J. Meyer



HR Happenings

How to improve communication skills - The best messages are often simple.

There's no value in delivering any kind of communication, whether written, verbal, formal, or casual, **if the message doesn't come across clearly.** Communicating concisely – while maintaining interest and including everything your team needs to know – is a high-level communication skill.

Here are some ways to communicate better.

Keep your audience in mind

Your audience will naturally be more interested and engaged when you **tailor your communications to their interests.** Piquing their interest by speaking directly to what matters to them will naturally engage their desire to understand and interact with the information.

Don't use 10 words when one will do

Even the most engaged and committed audience will eventually get bored. **Keeping your message simple** and concise will make it easier to understand and retain. Remember, you already know what you're going to say, but they're hearing it for the first time. Keep it simple.

Consider the best method to deliver your message

If the information you're conveying isn't urgent, consider sending an email or a memo. This is especially important when communicating expectations. **Written communication will give your audience more time to review it,** think it over, and follow up with questions. It will also give them a handy record to refer back to.

Get them involved

If you've ever worked as an instructor, manager, trainer, or coach, you'll know that there are **few better ways to learn new information than to teach it.** Ask them for their input or to take a role in explaining new concepts and policies to their colleagues.

Leverage face-to-face communication when possible

Communicating face-to-face adds multiple layers of information to an exchange, whether between two people or two hundred. Often, there's a synergy created with in-person communication that's difficult to replicate elsewhere. Here are some tips to make the most of face time with your team:

Make eye contact

If you're wondering whether or not your message is getting across, **few metrics provide as much feedback as eye contact.** You can easily tell if the person you're speaking to is understanding you, is distracted, worried, or confused – much of which is lost in digital communication.

Ask for feedback

Not sure they got it? Ask! **A powerful technique is to ask people to repeat back their version of what you just said.** Often, this can improve retention, immediate understanding, and minimize misunderstandings later. You can also ask them to reach out to you with helpful ways that you can improve your delivery in presentations and other forms of communication.

Read non-verbal cues

There are various types of nonverbal cues. Yawns, fidgeting, and looking around the room are usually clear signs that your audience is **thinking about something other than what you're trying to convey.** If you notice this, don't take it personally. Try asking them to share what's on their mind, recap previous points they may have missed, or adjourn for a later time.

Minimize distractions

If you're chatting with someone (or a group) face-to-face, keep distractions at bay by **leaving unnecessary electronic devices out of the space.** Keep the attendance limited to just those who need to be there and avoid scheduling at a time when people are likely to focus on something else (like just before the end of the day or right before lunch).

Jaclyn



Health & Safety



Winter Safe Driving Tips: Navigating the Cold Season with Confidence

As winter blankets the world in a layer of snow and ice, the roads become a challenging terrain for drivers. Snow-covered streets, icy patches, and reduced visibility can make winter driving a daunting task. However, with proper preparation and caution, you can navigate the winter roads safely. This article will provide you with essential winter safe driving tips to ensure a smooth and secure journey during the cold season.

1. Prepare Your Vehicle:

- **Winter Tires:** Invest in a set of winter tires with deep treads designed to provide better traction on snow and ice.
- **Check Antifreeze Levels:** Ensure that your vehicle's antifreeze is at the correct level to prevent the engine coolant from freezing.
- **Battery Health:** Cold temperatures can be tough on car batteries. Have your battery tested to ensure it's in good condition.
- **Brakes and Lights:** Check your brakes and lights regularly, as they are crucial for safe winter driving.

2. Slow Down and Increase Following Distance:

- **Reduced Visibility:** Snow, sleet, and freezing rain can limit visibility. Reduce your speed and increase your following distance to have ample time to react to unexpected situations.
- **Black Ice Awareness:** Be cautious of black ice, which is often invisible on the road. Slow down when temperatures drop, especially in shaded areas.

3. Stay Informed About Weather Conditions:

- **Check Forecasts:** Before heading out, check the weather forecast and road conditions. Avoid unnecessary trips during severe weather conditions.
- **Emergency Kit:** Pack an emergency kit with essentials such as a blanket, flashlight, extra clothing, and non-perishable snacks in case you get stranded.

4. Clear Snow and Ice:

- **Full Visibility:** Remove all snow and ice from your vehicle, including the roof, hood, and lights, to ensure maximum visibility.
- **Snow Buildup:** Regularly clear snow buildup from wheel wells to prevent interference with the tires' movement.

5. Proper Use of Lights:

- **Headlights:** Use your headlights, even during the day, to increase your visibility to other drivers.
- **Fog Lights:** When necessary, use fog lights to improve visibility in adverse weather conditions.

6. Avoid Cruise Control:

- **Manual Control:** Use manual control over acceleration and deceleration. Avoid using cruise control in slippery conditions to maintain better control over your vehicle.

7. Know Your Brakes:

- **Anti-lock Brakes (ABS):** Familiarize yourself with the operation of your vehicle's anti-lock brake system. Apply steady pressure to the brake pedal and let ABS do its job.

8. Stay Updated on Road Conditions:

- **Traffic Updates:** Stay informed about road closures, accidents, and traffic updates through local radio or navigation apps.
- **Plan Routes:** Choose well-traveled routes that are more likely to be plowed.

Winter driving demands extra caution and preparation. By following these winter safe driving tips, you can enhance your safety and the safety of others on the road. Remember to stay vigilant, adapt to changing conditions, and prioritize safety over speed during the cold season. Safe travels!

Jay



From the Board of Directors

Join our Board of Directors!

Are you looking for a meaningful way to make a positive difference in our community?

Madawaska Valley Association for Community Living is a not for profit charitable organization that has been serving our community since 1967.

We seek motivated members from our community to join us in our mission of

“Working together to improve the quality of life for people with intellectual disabilities.”

Candidates for this volunteer position will bring experience and/or expertise in a variety of fields including leadership, not-for-profits, fundraising, finance or law.

This is **YOUR** opportunity to meet new people, develop new skills and contribute positively to inclusion in our community.

Interested parties should send a letter of interest along with your resume to:

Monica Prymack, Executive Director

P.O. Box 1178, 19460 Opeongo Line, Barry's Bay, Ontario K0J 1B0

(613)756-3817 email: mprymack@mvacl.ca





From the Executive Director

As we wrap up the month of January, I feel determined to embrace the New Year with optimism and a sense of excitement and anticipation for all that lies ahead. The past year brought its share of challenges, but it also underlined our collective strength and resilience. I believe in our ability to navigate the road ahead and work together toward our goals as defined in our strategic plan. (Check out our website, www.mvacl.ca)

Our team is dedicated to fostering innovation, collaboration, and inclusivity as we work toward our shared goals. Together, we will meet challenges and turn them into opportunities for growth.

The commitment and passion of our team; direct support staff, administrative and management staff along with our Board of Directors, are the driving forces behind our success. I am confident that together we can continue our mission of “Working together to improve the quality of life for people with intellectual disabilities.”

I look forward to engaging with members of our MVACL and broader communities, listening to your valuable insights, and working collaboratively to make a difference.

As we embark on this new year, let’s embrace change, welcome new possibilities, and continue to make a difference in the lives of those we serve. Thank you for your continued dedication. I am excited to see what we can accomplish together in 2024.

Wishing you a year filled with success, joy and meaningful accomplishments

Monica

