



# CONNECTING OUR COMMUNITY

A Madawaska Valley Association For Community Living Publication  
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October 2024

## Making Dreams Come True



Matthew Stewart achieved a life long dream of visiting Canada's East Coast in September. His support staff, Luqe Jones, worked with Matthew's family to help him achieve this goal. Both Matthew and Luqe had a wonderful trip!



## Happenings at The Community Connect

We are so excited to announce the opening of the Community Connect. Congratulations to Kelly Dombroski for winning the “Name the Space Contest.”

The Community Connect team has so much to be thankful for. We have launched the “Come Craft and Cook with me Program.” All activities are inclusive and adaptive workshops that invite participants to be creative while making connections and learning new skills. Each session was at capacity, such a success.

Our first craft session featured Mason Jar Firefly Lanterns and Hand stamped Books. All participants were so happy to see each other and connect. It was wonderful to hear everyone making plans to attend the next one together. The discussions at this session led to adding the Cook with Me component. It was unanimous that cooking was something that everyone wanted to be involved in. The next event featured Terra-cotta Scarecrows and Pumpkin magnets. The third session required 2 dates due to a large interest. The group made Fall Tea Towels and enjoyed homemade butternut squash soup, cheese bun and choice of smoothie or hot apple cider.

If you or someone you know would like to be added to the contact list for upcoming events, please contact Kelly Norlock at 613-756-6644 or [knorlock@mvacl.ca](mailto:knorlock@mvacl.ca)

The Community Connect Team would like to thank all participants and look forward to connecting with you all.







Kelly, Renee, Amanda, Lisa, Tracey, Lavina, Amanda L, Jane, Stella, Orpha, Claire, Clorissia take part in creating fall tea towels







## Richard, Courtney, Peter and Maryanne making mason jar firefly lanterns and hand stamped books



Courtney, Amanda L, Stella, Orpha and Jane are also taking part in the craft







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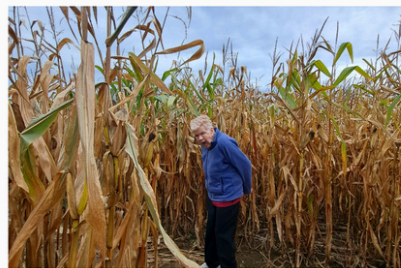
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Pumpkins after dark was a spooktacular experience for Jane, Orpha and Amanda L .



Lots of fun was also had with everyone including Scott & Eric as they visited Sandhill Nursery in Huntsville







**NEW MEMBERS OF THE MVACL TEAM**



Eleanor Bautista



Amber Dupuis



Stacey Irwin - Welcome back!



Humara Brewster

**Congratulations!!**



Congratulations to Savanna Cybulski Parks  
on successfully completing her DSW Apprenticeship.





## Outgoing Board Members

### There are volunteers ....and then there are VOLUNTEERS!

It is with mixed feelings that we accepted the resignations of both Bridget Gutoskie and Corrine Higgins at our Board meeting in October.

MVACL's Board of Directors has been blessed with a team of dedicated volunteers, all of whom had been here for at least 10 years until these resignations.

Bridget Gutoskie has been on the Board of Directors for MVACL since 1993. In '94 Bridget took on the role of secretary. From 1995-1999 she was the Vice-President. In 2000 Bridget took on the role of President for the next three years. After taking two years off, Bridget returned as President in 2006, and has remained in that role until now.

Bridget has been a tremendous help to our agency over the years, always there to lend an ear, and showing up religiously year after year to sign cheques. Fortunately Bridget will remain in an advisory role as, as Past President.

Corinne Higgins first came on our Board of Directors scene in 1989, and remained a director through 1990, and 1991. She rejoined the board in 2007 and has been a member ever since. In 2013 she took on the role of Vice President, chairing meetings whenever Bridget couldn't attend.

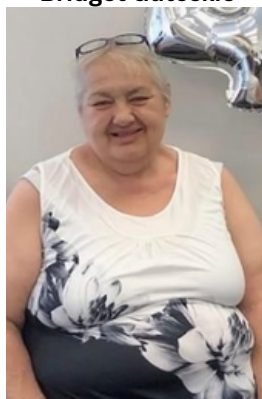
Their support and caring questions will be our loss. We do however wish to thank them both for their long lived commitment to our agency, and wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

Thank-you from the bottom of our hearts.

### Our new Board Executive consists of:

**Joanne Hartwig** – President  
**Rosemary Miller** – Vice-President  
**Jenna Mercier** - Vice-President  
**Lavina Prince** – Honourary Vice-President  
**Jane Visneskie** – Treasurer  
**Sherry Hecht** – Secretary Although not a Board Member Sherry has provided administrative support to the Board for many years.

Bridget Gutoskie



Corinne Higgins



**If you run into our valued Board members on the street, help us appreciate them by saying hello and Thank-you.**





## New Board of Directors Members



Hello, my name is Sabina Blank. I am an educator with previous experience in the speech-language and child developmental fields. I was born and raised in the Valley and am fortunate enough to call this place home again. I enjoy the outdoors, spending time with my family, and baking. I am excited to have this new opportunity to give back to this wonderful community by joining the Board of Directors at MVACL.



Hi! My name is Jenna, and I'm so happy to be a part of the MVACL team! Originally from Quebec, I'm so happy to be living in and around the area and working at MVDS. I'm a huge craft lover and love being in nature. Thanks for welcoming me to the team 😊



Hello, My name is Warren and I am a dedicated funeral director with a deep commitment to providing compassionate support during life's most challenging moments. When I am not helping families honour their loved ones, you can find me kitesurfing along the coast, skiing down snowy slopes in the winter, or perfecting my swing on the golf course. Balancing a career in service with a passion for outdoor sports, I believe in celebrating life in all its forms.





# HR Happenings

## Making an 8-week Plan for Holiday Spending

If annual bank surveys are any guide, the average Canadian plans to spend around **\$1,800** on travel, gift giving, entertainment, food, and other related expenses during the holiday season. If your budget - or good sense - calls for spending something less than this, you can easily reduce your expenses, without reducing the fun, if you plan properly for the holidays. Here is an 8 week Holiday plan to keep your spirits high without breaking the bank this holiday season:

### Two Months Before

- Talk to family and friends about a holiday plan. What is reasonable for everyone financially this year, or is this the year to start new traditions?
- Starting your planning now means that you have time to be more creative with your ideas. You might have time to make some gifts (e.g. wine) and you have time to consider options that you might not have thought of before.

### Seven Weeks Before

- Look at your finances and your calendar. Decide what you can afford financially this holiday season and how much time you have to devote to special events and festivities over the holidays (which really start in the latter part of November and end early in January).
- Nail down your holiday spending budget – gifts, festivities, decorations, travel, entertainment, babysitters, taxis, hostess gifts, office party expenses, etc.
- Write down your goals for this holiday season. Deciding what's important to you before you're caught up in the hustle and bustle, gives you time to make a plan that you can stick to when the going gets busy.

### Six Weeks Before

- Look for ways to earn a little extra if you're budget is looking too lean.
- Take an inventory of your decorations and decide what you want to reuse this year – your string of lights might just need a few new bulbs.
- Complete your gift list and revise it as necessary, keeping your budget in mind.
- Look for travel deals and make plans to keep costs reasonable. If you plan to travel and must stay in a hotel when you get there, consider buying groceries and eating with your friends or family at their home rather than in a restaurant. Buy some non-perishable food and snack items to have ready in your hotel room. You'll save a little extra by not going to the hotel snack bar or vending machine. If your hotel offers a continental breakfast, eating there will save one meal out that day.

### Five Weeks Before

- Consider what clothes you and your family need over the holidays – borrow white tops/dark bottoms for kids that need them, have your outfits/suits dry-cleaned and/or mended / altered so that they're ready when you need them, buy a new tie or accessories to update a look you already have in your closet (don't forget about shoes for everyone too).
- Cross off items that you don't need to buy because you've made other plans, e.g. potlucks, gift exchanges to narrow whom you need to buy for, volunteer opportunities instead of gifts, etc.
- Watch for sales at the grocery store. Store them for later in the cupboard or freezer.





# HR Happenings

## Four Weeks Before

- Wrap and mail packages that are heading out of town. Make sure that these gifts, as well as the costs associated with shipping them, are part of your budget.
- Avoid the buy now, pain later effect of credit cards. Pay with cash as much as possible.
- After you've got what you need for someone, cross them off the list so you are not tempted to keep on buying.
- Keep a running tally of what you have spent. Check back often to stay on track. Before making a purchase, ask yourself if it fits within the plan.
- Choose off-peak times to do your shopping. Eat first, bring a bottle of water and don't go if you're stressed and off your mark – it takes energy to make good choices and to stick to your list.

## Three Weeks Before

- Re-check that you and your family are outfitted for the season – start packing before things get too busy.
- If you are traveling by car over the holidays, now is the time to make sure the car is ready for driving in the colder weather.
- Update your overall holiday budget in comparison to what you have spent. If you have overspent in one area, look for ways to cut back in others.
- If you are using a credit card, keep it simple and stick with one. Use the one with the lowest interest rate if you know that you'll be carrying a balance. If you haven't set aside any savings, set a maximum limit of what you will spend on your credit card. We recommend an amount that does not exceed what you can comfortably afford to pay off within the first 3 months of the New Year. Don't forget to add in the interest and service charges.

## Two Weeks Before

- Wrap all the gifts (hopefully using wrapping paper you bought on sale last year).
- Complete your holiday decorating – let everyone in your family be involved.
- Enjoy the season and take advantage of the many low-cost and free events in your community.

## One Week Before

- Make a list of everyone you want to call. Thanks to technology, there are many low-cost ways to stay in touch.
- Check your list to make sure that you have bought what you need and that your calendar is updated.
- Finalize your holiday meal plan and complete your grocery shopping.

## The Week of the Holidays

- Keep a list of all the gifts you receive so that you will have an easier time writing thank-you notes.
- Enjoy this special time of year with family and friends.

## The Week after the Holidays

- Scope out the best post-holiday sales on wrapping paper and decorations.

## The First Month of the New Year

- Develop next year's holiday spending plan using last year's budget as a guide.
- Start a savings plan in January so that you will have all of the funds on hand before the start of the season.

*Jaclyn*





## Health & Safety



### Prioritizing Personal Health: A Guide for Direct Support Professionals at MVACL

Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) in the developmental services sector play a critical role in supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. While the focus is often on the care and well-being of the individuals served, it's equally important for DSPs to prioritize their own health and safety. Maintaining personal health is not just beneficial for the DSP, but it also ensures that they can provide the highest quality of care.

This article highlights key health and safety considerations for DSPs, emphasizing the importance of self-care, stress management, and physical safety in a demanding yet rewarding field.

#### 1. Physical Health and Injury Prevention

DSPs often face physically demanding tasks such as lifting, transferring individuals, and assisting with mobility. These activities, if not done with proper techniques, can lead to injury—especially to the back, shoulders, and knees. Here are some essential tips for injury prevention: **Use Proper Lifting Techniques:** Always bend your knees, keep your back straight, and use your leg muscles to lift. Avoid twisting while lifting, as this can cause strain on the spine. **Use Lifts When Required:** When lifting or transferring individuals who require significant support, use the lifts provided. This will reduce the risk of injury for both you and the individual.

**Ergonomics:** Adjust your working environment to promote good posture. When seated, ensure your chair provides proper back support and your feet are flat on the floor.

#### 2. Mental and Emotional Health

The nature of the job can be emotionally demanding. DSPs may face challenges such as managing behavioural outbursts, dealing with medical complexities, or navigating difficult family dynamics. Over time, these stressors can lead to burnout, anxiety, or depression.

**Stress Management:** Incorporate regular breaks during your workday to rest and recharge.

**Practice deep breathing exercises or mindfulness techniques to reduce stress levels.**

**Seek Support:** Don't hesitate to reach out to supervisors, managers, or peers if you are feeling overwhelmed. Talking about your experiences and emotions can significantly reduce the mental load.

**Set Boundaries:** While empathy and compassion are crucial in this field, it's important to establish boundaries to prevent emotional exhaustion. Remember that maintaining your mental health will allow you to provide better care in the long run.



## Health & Safety



### 3. Work-Life Balance

It's easy to become consumed by the demands of the job, but maintaining a healthy work-life balance is essential. Overworking can lead to burnout and reduce job satisfaction. Here are a few tips for managing your personal time:

**Time Off:** Take advantage of vacation days and personal leave. Time away from work helps you recharge mentally and physically, allowing you to return refreshed and ready to perform your best.

**Hobbies and Interests:** Engage in activities outside of work that you enjoy, whether it's exercising, reading, or spending time with friends and family. These activities can provide much-needed relaxation and joy.

**Healthy Routines:** Ensure you're getting enough sleep, eating nutritious meals, and incorporating physical activity into your daily life. These routines support overall well-being and prevent fatigue.

### 4. Nutrition and Hydration

Proper nutrition and hydration are essential for maintaining energy levels and focus during long shifts. DSPs often work irregular hours, making it easy to skip meals or make unhealthy food choices.

**Balanced Diet:** Incorporate fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins into your meals. These foods provide sustained energy and improve overall health.

**Stay Hydrated:** Drink plenty of water throughout the day to stay hydrated, especially if you're engaging in physical activities. Avoid excessive consumption of sugary or caffeinated beverages, which can lead to energy crashes.

**Healthy Snacks:** Keep nutritious snacks like nuts, yogurt, or fruits on hand for quick energy boosts during your shift.

### Conclusion

As a Direct Support Professional, your role is invaluable. However, to provide the best care to others, you must also take care of yourself. By prioritizing your physical, emotional, and mental health, you can enhance your performance, reduce stress, and enjoy a long and fulfilling career in developmental services. Remember, your well-being is essential to your ability to support others.

*Jay*





## *From the Executive Director*

Fall brings a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the year so far and embrace the cozy moments that come with the season. Perhaps you are considering what activities you may wish to engage in over the coming colder months. Always remember to make some time for you. People supported by MVACL & their staff are always looking to find ways to have meaningful days and meet goals.

Our new Community Connect program will be offering a number of activities that will hopefully appeal to a variety of interests in the coming months. Funds from our “January Jingle”, post-holiday budget booster fund raiser will go to this program. If you, or someone you know, have skills or ideas you’d like to propose or share, please reach out. Priority One on our strategic plan is to expand our programs to support more people. Community Connect is one way we are hoping to achieve this.

In an effort to create a safe, healthy and supportive place to work, (Priority Two), Rainmaker Strategy Group provided Enhancing Emotional Resilience training for all staff, earlier this month. The goal of this training was to empower individuals to navigate life’s challenges with increased self-awareness and adaptive coping strategies. It provided tips and tools to enhance emotional well-being.

Priority Three, is to Broaden our community’s perception of who we are and what we do. Often people in our community have little to no idea about who we are, and what we do. Our website, newsletters, and social media sites, are a great way to access information about us. We ask all our staff team of 79, along with the people we support and their families to share with friends, family and acquaintances, our mission to improve the quality of life for people with intellectual disabilities.

It's all about inclusion.

If you have any questions about our organization, would like to share ideas, are interested in potential volunteer work, or would like to support our fundraising campaign, please contact us at 613-756-3817 and your call will be directed to the appropriate person.

Wishing everyone a warm and healthy fall,

*Monica*

