



Annual Report

2020-2021



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A Message from Board President Matt Huddleston

We are still in this together! Our team at Community Living Huntsville continues to be passionate and plan for the future when we “open up” again. We are excited about increased interaction as the pandemic, and the isolation due to the pandemic, has had an impact on the people we support.

We would like to thank our staff, volunteers, and donors that have continued to support Community Living Huntsville in 2021. Looking forward to seeing everyone in person in 2022.

Matt Huddleston

President, Board of Directors



A Message from Executive Director Suzanne Willett

Our annual report looks a bit different this year.

It includes, as in years past, messages from our board president, reports from board committee chairs, a strategic plan update, and a financial report. But it also includes stories. Stories about frustration, adaptation, and hope. Stories about new opportunities and initiatives. Stories about people and families we support and the perseverance of our team members.

While these stories do not cover everything we have experienced or done in the past year, they do offer snapshots of life. They remind us of why advocacy, self-determination, and inclusion efforts championed by people, families, and Community Living Huntsville are all the more vital after a damaging period of isolation – and why we are still in this together.

As we head into 2022, we will celebrate our 60th anniversary. In addition to celebrating, we will reflect on how far we have come and acknowledge how far we have to go.

Suzanne Willett

Executive Director



Advocating for inclusion
since 1962

Our Vision

Opening doors in
an inclusive community.

Our Purpose

Fostering inclusiveness for
people to live, work and play in
unique and purposeful ways.

*Community Living Huntsville is
a not-for-profit, registered
charity that supports and
advocates alongside people
with developmental disabilities
to live the life they choose in
their community.*

*Find more at clhuntsville.ca
or follow us
on Facebook, Instagram,
Twitter and LinkedIn.*

A BIT ABOUT WHO WE ARE

Celebrating our history and our future

Today it would be hard to imagine a world where children are sent away from their homes and communities because they live with developmental disabilities. Prior to the 1960s, this was the reality for many families in Muskoka. Parents and caregivers were advised to send their children to a residential institution to receive the supports they needed. Institutions like the former Huronia Regional Centre in Orillia and the local Lakewood Nursing Home in Huntsville were far from ideal. Here children and adults lived in segregated buildings and had little to no choice in their daily lives.

The “community living movement” inspired new possibilities. This grassroots movement believed that, with the right supports in place, people living with developmental disabilities could stay in their own communities and participate as valued community members.

In Huntsville, parents of children with developmental disabilities started the Blue Horizons Nursery School. Run by volunteers out of church basements, the school was part of the shift where inclusion could be possible.

By 1971, this progressive group established a not-for-

profit organization and hired its first two part-time staff. The organization expanded its services to support older children and adults through skills programs and group homes.

In 1987, the organization was renamed Community Living Huntsville to reflect its purpose to support people living with developmental disabilities to be recognized as important members of their community. Community Living Huntsville now operated an integrated Resource Teacher program to support children in mainstream schools and daycares. The organization also provided supports for people to live independently in their own homes. By 1990, Community Living Huntsville started its Supported Employment program, an opportunity for people to connect with local employers who would value their skills and contributions.

Community Living Huntsville has evolved to become an organization with a rich history of disability rights and inclusion. We support over 300 children and adults and their families in Huntsville and North Muskoka. We are a proud employer of roughly 80 people in our community.

While Community Living Huntsville has changed over the years, one thing remains the same – we continue to support the growth of an inclusive community where everyone’s voices are heard, their decisions are respected, and their contributions are valued.

Community Living Huntsville respectfully acknowledges that we are on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg under the terms of Robinson-Huron Treaty No. 61 of 1850 and the Williams Treaties of 1923. We are grateful to be here. We hope you are too. We commit to acknowledge, learn, educate, create opportunity, honour sacred places, and take actions toward real truth and reconciliation in support of our commitment to walking the path together in respect, peace, and harmony for future generations. G’chi miigwech. Thank you very much.

Our Services

Community Living Huntsville supports more than 300 children and adults with developmental disabilities and their families in North Muskoka.

We envision a future where the community listens to and honours the voice, respects the rights, and values the contributions of everyone.

Child and Youth Services

Our Children and Youth Services team includes Resource Consultants and Family Support Workers. Resource Consultants support children ages 18 months to six years, who have a developmental delay or are at risk for a developmental delay, and their families. A child does not require a diagnosis to access these supports. And Family Support Workers support children ages six to 18, diagnosed with developmental disabilities, and their families. We offer support to families to access respite services too.

Our team also works in collaboration with licensed child-care centres and schools to ensure all children and youth are able to access support, and to promote inclusion.

Adult Services

We provide a variety of government-funded supports and services for adults with developmental disabilities, including Group Living and Supported Independent Living, Community Participation,

Supported Employment, and Planning.

Our Group Living team supports people to live in a group home in their community with flexible 24-hour supports tailored to their needs. People are encouraged and supported to be as independent as possible and make their own decisions.

Our Supported Independent Living team supports people to live in their own home in their community. Support is flexible and tailored to a person's individual support needs.

Community Participation

Our Community Participation team offers adults ages 18 years and older the supports they require to meaningfully participate in their community as fully as they choose. Supports are tailored to the person, and focus on people living the life they choose in an inclusive community.

Supported Employment

Our Supported Employment team supports people in developing their employment-related skills, securing jobs that meet their interests, skills, abilities and experience, and offers on-the-job coaching and ongoing collaboration with employees and employers as needed to help ensure everyone's needs are met.

We also expanded our resources and services in January 2021 by partnering with Fleming Muskoka-Kawarthas Employment Services.

Planning Services

We support people to explore, discover, and work toward the life they want to lead in their community. Our team listens to what the person feels is important, now and into future, guides a planning process that focuses on the person as the decision-maker, and supports the person through ongoing action to realize their plan.

We focus on self-determination, person-directed planning, capacity building, relationships and networks, and community participation and contribution, with community as a first resource to achieving a person's goals.

Connections

Our fee-based Connections program is available to people and families with Developmental Services Ontario Passport funds or other personal funding sources who want to purchase our supports and services. Our co-ordinator works with people to create personalized plans, access services, and build a life that is truly their own based on their budget and interests.

Pathways

Our Pathways Program for adults, diagnosed with developmental disabilities but deemed ineligible for government-funded supports through Developmental Services Ontario or waitlisted for services, offers supports and services free to people in need. Pathways relies on donations and fund-raised dollars.

Community Engagement
Committee

To say the last year was challenging would be an understatement. However, we cannot emphasize enough that it was also a year marked by new beginnings, persistence, and a clear commitment from our donors to support people with developmental disabilities in our community.

Well over a year ago, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. Our 2020-21 fundraising year was anything but business as usual. The pandemic was (and continues to be) a challenge for everyone, but especially for the people we support, though, generally, people’s spirits have remained high. As so many have said this past year, “We are all in this together.”

Over the last year, Community Living Huntsville continued to grow and increase its profile in our

community. We worked hard to continue to align our deliverables to our strategic plan. This saw the addition of our Community Engagement Specialist, Jennifer Jerrett, who started full-time with the organization in January. We were able to continue to further our strategic plan by having a voice and role at the new Muskoka Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Anti-Racism (IDEA) Advisory Group facilitated by the District of Muskoka.

Our top priority remained the same, and with the help of our donors, we were able to ensure that people in our community with developmental disabilities had access to support, and help navigating the forever-changing health-care guidelines and vaccination rules. We are so grateful for the countless donations, not only monetary but of gifts, phone calls, and emails, for the people and families we support.

While the world shutdown in response to the virus, at Community Living Huntsville our virtual doors stayed open for those who needed us

most. Stepping out beyond our doors, we reached into the community to provide our support.

We are all tired, but we are all still staying afloat, so from the bottom of our hearts thank you. Thank you to the visionaries, the advocates, the trend-setters, who all rallied when our kids, youth, adults, and families needed you most. Thank you for helping us reconceive a world of possibility.

Tish Firman

Chair, Community Engagement Committee

Jennifer Jerrett

Community Engagement Specialist

Committee Members

Tish Firman (Chair)	Suzanne Willett
Sue Fitzsimmons	Jennifer Jerrett
Matt Huddlestone	Alison Brownlee
Myke Malone	

Governance Committee

It has been a productive year with respect to governance. We received approval for our new Articles of Incorporation (previously named Letters Patent) from the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee in 2020. We still await final approval from Service Ontario (Ministry of Consum-

er and Government Services). Each year going forward, one third of our policies will be revisited quarterly to make sure they are still relevant and to add new policies with respect to, but not limited to, new funding initiatives and new committees of the board.

The new and improved Articles of Incorporation, board bylaw, and board policies will provide the

current and future board of directors the guidance they need to keep the services of Community Living Huntsville attainable for people with a developmental disability for years to come.

Debbie Kirwin

Chair, Governance Committee

Finance Committee

The finance committee, consisting of at least three members, assists the board in ensuring the organization operates in a financially prudent manner with appropriate controls in place to safeguard assets and to identify and mitigate financial risks.

This fiscal year the committee oversaw a budget in excess of \$6 million. The main funding partners are the Ministry of Children, Community and So-

cial Services, and the District of Muskoka. This year Community Living Huntsville saw additional funds from Fleming Muskoka-Kawartha Employment Services to expand its employment program.

The committee met regularly to receive and approve financial reports and budgets. The committee is confident that all government statutory filings were completed on time.

The committee also continued to work with staff and the governance committee to review and rewrite board policies related to finance as a portion

of an overall review of board policies.

However, the biggest challenge of the year was the COVID-19 pandemic and the limitations it continued to place on staff and services. Community Living Huntsville adapted well, but the committee looks to a post-pandemic future with hope and optimism.

Matt Huddleston

Chair, Finance Committee



Nominations Committee Report

Community Living Huntsville Board of Directors 2020-2021:

Matt Huddlestone – President/Treasurer
Myke Malone – Vice-President
Debbie Kirwin – Director
Debi Davis – Director
Tish Firman – Director
Michel Potvin – Director
Morgan Richter – Director
Alyshia Meredith – Director

The Community Living board of directors started the year with eight members. We are ending the year with seven board members, as one member

had to end their term early. And going into the 2021-2022 year, Debi Davis has come to the end of her third term and is required to step down from the board. We can't thank her enough for her hard work and support over the past six years.

We thank these board members for their contribution, time, and commitment to Community Living Huntsville.

Community Living Huntsville's board of directors provides the following recommendations for the upcoming 2021-2022 term:

Members Recommended for Reappointment:

Tish Firman
Debbie Kirwin
Myke Malone

Proposed New Members to the Board:

Jim Alexander
Bernadette Lovegrove
Helena Renwick

Proposed Board of Directors 2021-2022:

Jim Alexander	Myke Malone
Tish Firman	Michel Potvin
Matt Huddlestone	Helena Renwick
Debbie Kirwin	Morgan Richter
Bernadette Lovegrove	

Myke Malone

Chair, Nominations Committee



Jim Alexander

Born in London, Ontario, Jim completed elementary and high school in Sarnia, Ontario. He graduated with a chemical engineering degree from Queen's University and an MBA from Western University. Jim's career included oil refining in Sarnia, fertilizer manufacturing in Trail, British Columbia, operating an appliance service company in Toronto, and a sporting goods importing business in Brampton, Ontario, before he and his wife, Jane, purchased a trailer-hitch manufacturing company in Huntsville in 1975. That business, Hidden Hitch and Algonquin Automotive, was sold to their oldest son, Rob, in 1998.

Jim and Jane met at Queen's in 1961 and have been together since. They have three children all living in Huntsville, eight grandchildren, and one great-grandchild. And the couple has had the luxury of extensive world travel (Jane is fluent in French). They have lived in British Columbia, London, Mississauga, Ireland, Cyprus, Florida, Michigan, Toronto, and the Bahamas.

Jim has served on the Muskoka Aquatic Club board, Doug Milliken's Huntsville waterfront development committee, Tom Pinckard's Huntsville community centre committee, the Huntsville hospital board, the Huntsville Festival of the Arts board, the Huntsville town and theater centre committee, the local Habitat for Humanity board, and the Muskoka Mayors' Prayer Breakfast committee.

A passionate team of dedicated volunteers who champion inclusion in our community

Bernadette Lovegrove

Bernadette brings a varied background to the Community Living Huntsville board of directors.

Born and raised in Whitehorse, Yukon, she moved to Toronto at an early age to become a journalist. In 2007, following a successful career as a writer and editor, Bernadette relocated to Huntsville and pursued her second calling to work with children as an elementary teacher. In her local school community, Bernadette strives to create a learning environment where students' diverse life experiences and differences are valued and respected.

Bernadette's goal is to help ensure that all individuals have the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to their communities.

Helena Renwick

Since moving to Huntsville more than 25 years ago and raising three beautiful children with her husband, Cameron, Helena has been involved with many community initiatives and organizations such as the opening of the Town of Huntsville's

Algonquin Theatre, working with Huntsville-Lake of Bays Chamber of Commerce, and serving as Executive Director for the Downtown Huntsville BIA.

In 2018 she ran for a position on Town of Huntsville council and after a narrow loss Helena changed careers, leaving the Downtown Huntsville BIA to pursue a career in art. She has used her many connections with various arts groups to foster a healthy and productive business of producing and selling art. Helena has created many large paintings and designs for various theatrical productions in Huntsville, but now she feels a special connection to more personal works of portraying landscapes. She has taught painting classes at Deerhurst Resort and she instructs painting classes through the Huntsville Festival of the Arts and Huntsville Art Society. In September 2019 she began teaching Beginner Acrylic classes and Life Drawing at More Than Just Art.

Her love and connection to this town has enabled her to give back to the community in so many ways. Being a part of Community Living Huntsville is one of those ways.

Strategic Plan 2019 - 2023

Purpose Statement: Fostering inclusiveness for people to live, work, and play in unique and purposeful ways.



Strategic Direction #1: Intentional Innovation

Goal #1

Be intentional about applying creativity, using technology, and engaging partners to find innovative solutions to:

- a) Affordable housing
- b) Lifetime transition services for:
 - i. Children
 - ii. Youth & their families entering the adult service system
 - iii. People requiring supports associated with aging & end of life
 - iv. People requiring new or altered supports due to aging family members
- c) Expanding meaningful employment & other opportunities in the community
- d) Influencing education & life-long learning organizations
- e) Moving community awareness and advocacy efforts forward



Strategic Direction #2: Cohesive & Creative Workplace Culture

Goal #2

Cultivate a cohesive and creative workplace culture by engaging Community Living Huntsville's staff team, in:

- a) Identifying together, why Community Living Huntsville is adopting an innovative approach to our work, and how each of our stakeholders will benefit
- b) Using collaborative and creative approaches to seize opportunities & solve challenges
- c) Developing a culture that promotes informed risk-taking in a safe environment, and learning from the things we have tried
- d) Working across programs to try new things and to provide seamless support
- e) Exploring learning opportunities that enable the team to communicate more effectively, both internally & with members of our community



Strategic Direction #3: Resource Development

Goal #3

Access new funds and resources to promote sustainable supports for people using services by:

- a) Reaching out to existing & new partners from the private and public sectors, to co-create mutually beneficial initiatives
- b) Having a voice, role and vote at decision-making tables locally, regionally, and provincially
- c) Growing direct funding and fee-for-service options
- d) Expanding the application of Community Living Huntsville's sustainable fundraising model
- e) Exploring social enterprise as an opportunity for fund development
- f) Designing and implementing a deliberate and focused approach to finding efficiencies
- g) Connecting with other organizations in the geographical area to explore possibilities of ways to share resources to minimize administrative costs and maximize effectiveness, while maintaining Community Living Huntsville's identity

Strategic Plan Update

As I reflect on this past year, the word that comes to mind is: grateful.

- Grateful that no one we support contracted COVID-19 in our 2020-2021 fiscal year
- Grateful that we live, work, and play in a supportive community
- Grateful to our staff that continually demonstrated flexibility and collaboration over the past year
- Grateful to our passionate board of directors for its support and dedication during these unprecedented times
- Grateful for our donors who see and value the great work that Community Living Huntsville does in our community
- Grateful to the District of Muskoka which pro-

vides many of the people we support in our community with rent subsidies that enable them to secure safe housing (Goal #1a)

- Grateful to Fleming College which recognized the great work we do in our Supported Employment program – the college provided us with additional employment support funding to enable more jobseekers to find competitive employment (Goal #1c)
- Grateful to the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services which recognizes the great work we do in all of our program areas and have allowed us to explore providing additional services to those completing high school (Goal #1bii)
- Grateful to the facilitators from Christian Horizons who trained our staff in Fierce Conversations (Goal #2e)
- Grateful to volunteers who want to see the sustainability of Community Living Huntsville through a social enterprise (Goal #3e)

- Grateful to our dedicated and passionate leadership team members who participate in community and provincial committees – advocating for the people we support (Goal #3b)

For all this and more I am truly grateful.

Even as COVID has demanded so much of our focus in the past year, our team has managed to make strides toward the organization's strategic goals. Those goals, set in 2019 when no one could have predicted the future in which we now find ourselves, remain an important plan for our organization, team members, people and families we support, and community now and into future.

Acting on these goals continues to keep Community Living Huntsville's work relevant and the organization sustainable over time. Efforts continue.

Suzanne Willett

Executive Director



Why Huntsville and area is 'Still in This Together'

Huntsville resident Cindy Payne has tried to make the most of an isolating year.

"I try and stay positive," she smiled.

Cindy, who lives independently with some support from Community Living Huntsville, said the COVID-19 public health crisis had made life a bit awkward for her since, as an avid volunteer with community events like Band on the Run and Community Living Huntsville's Inclusion Tours, and as an in-person facilitator for initiatives like Advocates Against Abuse, she had to adapt to a world of postponed activities, physical distance, and provincial stay-at-home orders.

And she had persevered.

Cindy with some support from the Community Living Huntsville Supported Employment team was able to secure a job in the bakery at Independent Grocer in October, which helped not only as a source of income, but also as a means to share her talents. "It's busy," she laughed.

She was also able to spend time with family, who lives nearby.

Now she looks forward to a future where "we can just lick this problem" and the pandemic ends, so Huntsville can return to its lively self, and everyone

can actively reconnect with their community. But everyone has to be in it together. "We would help each other," she said.

Community Living Huntsville and others across Ontario celebrate May as Community Living Month, an annual awareness campaign to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of the community living movement in supporting and advocating for people with developmental disabilities to live the lives they choose.

The 2021 theme, "Still in This Together," honours the perseverance and resilience shown by those in the movement, as they continue to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic.

Christopher Jordan-Stevens, supervisor of Supported Independent Living for Community Living Huntsville, said the pandemic had affected people in different ways.

He noted, for example, there are people supported by Community Living Huntsville, who, after a lot of hard work by them and their support teams, had built routines, created personal connections, and actively participated in their community.

"And that has taken a lot of work on their part, given that they are part of a marginalized group with a certain set of labels attached to them (by society)," said Christopher.

But the pandemic had upended routines, and caused a reversion to isolation for many, which harmed mental as well as physical health.

"That has been very, very difficult for a lot of people," he said. "The activity of life and the feeling of community involvement has really gone down."

And then there were those who had not yet realized inclusion, even before the pandemic.

"I'm referring to a lot of young men and women, who experience homelessness, who experience addiction, who are in and out of incarceration, and they have never been involved or included in the community," said Christopher.

The pandemic, he argued, had little meaningful effect on their lives because they were already living day-to-day in constant emergency.

But the COVID-19 crisis had created an opportunity for socio-economic change: "Because now everyone sees the cracks in the system," he said. "Something invisible has been made visible by the pandemic. And we don't want it to fade back into invisibility. We need to keep it at the forefront."

And why does everyone need to be "still in this together"? Because people labelled with a disability are the best advocates, said Christopher, especially when others' privilege can create blinders to the real problems and best solutions.

"The most important voices to be involved in addressing these issues are the very voices this pandemic is affecting most acutely," he said. "Things need to change and the people who know how best to change them, and in the best spirit, are those whose voices are sometimes lost."



‘They opened so many doors’

Shantell Boyd says Community Living Huntsville made a difference for her and her family in the COVID-19 era.

“I called last March (2020) when we had first gone into lockdown. My kids were off the rails. I was going through some of my own personal stuff, too,” said the Huntsville resident. “I finally decided I was going to reach out for help. And I am not the kind of person that does that.”

Shantell, a mother of five children, four of whom have an autism diagnosis, said shortly after her family moved to Huntsville a school-based occupational therapist connected her to several community resources. One was the Children and Youth Services team at Community Living Huntsville.

“Community Living has been one of the most helpful, resourceful agencies I have ever known,” she said. “I wish I had come across them sooner, because I was struggling for far too long trying to do it all myself.”

The not-for-profit organization, she said, immediately helped her discover useful programs, services, and supports for her and her children, and complete applications for various resources such as respite.

Staff also helped her use temporary flexibility in

government funding to buy outdoor equipment for her children, which further helped ease some of the stress related to online school and stay-at-home orders, she said.

And staff connected her eldest daughter with Developmental Services Ontario and the Ontario Disability Support Program as she reached adulthood, which had given Shantell, as a mother, some peace of mind.

“They applied for things for us that I had never even heard of or known about,” she said. “They opened so many doors.”

But it was more than that. She felt support and kindness. And it was the little things, like book

have a different mindset.”

Stacey Bullock, manager of Children and Youth Services for Community Living Huntsville, said much in the past year had been difficult for children, teens, and their families, especially the shift to online learning.

“For some children online learning worked really well, but for a lot of children it has been difficult to navigate it and succeed with school,” said Stacey. “For some families we support, it added pressure, especially when parents (or guardians) struggled with the online learning system, too, and were not prepared to be teachers on top of supporting a child with needs.”

“Community Living has been one of the most helpful, resourceful agencies I have ever known.”

drop-offs, gift bags for the holidays, or a compassionate ear.

She encouraged other families to reach out to Community Living Huntsville to start a conversation. She noted access to services was not income based, nor was there a cost to families.

“I don’t think that we wake up and, suddenly, we’re OK,” she said. “I think it’s the help from everybody – community, family, friends, and professionals – that help us get to the point where we’re able to

And for children and youth with disabilities who already experienced social isolation even before the COVID-19 crisis, the separation from in-person school and activities deepened their sense of exclusion, which led to a rise in anxiety and mental health issues, she said.

A lot of children and teens struggled with physical health, too. “Weight gain has been a reality for a lot of people, kids especially,” said Stacey. “It’s been a tough year.”



Through it all staff built relationships, maintained connections, offered support, and continued to advocate with families based on their needs.

"I think the team is awesome," said Stacey. "They've had to be very creative in how they sup-

port families, and they've had to adjust in how they communicate with each family because each one is different."

She said it was sometimes difficult for the normally hands-on team to switch to virtual interactions,

especially as many families were under added pressure. But staff remained dedicated. And there was optimism on the horizon.

"It feels like we may be through the worst of it," said Stacey

'I am fed up with COVID'

Annette Mongeon was frustrated.

"I am fed up with staying in the house," said the Huntsville resident. "I am fed up with COVID."

Annette, who lives in a group home served by Community Living Huntsville's Supported Living team, said she understood how ministry and public health COVID-19 pandemic measures, such as physical distance and mask use, had protected people since March 2020.

But she, like so many others around the world, was ready for the public health crisis and its measures to end: "I wish COVID could be done," she said.

She missed in-person visits with family, café chats with friends, shopping in her community, and travel further afield to visit loved ones, unhampered by restrictions: "I like to go out shopping at Walmart. To see my friends at Tim Hortons," she said. "I like to see my family."

She relied on her knitting as a distraction and had spent time crafting dish cloths, baby hats, baby blankets, and more, in the months since the pandemic started.

And technology had helped her stay virtually connected with family, too.

But she, like nearly everyone, was ready to cast aside the virtual world in favour of the real one.

"Hopefully, COVID will be done soon," said Annette.

Linda McEachern, a fellow Huntsville community member and group home resident, described the past year in the COVID-19 crisis as difficult.

"I'm not happy. Sitting in the house is not good for me," she said. "I don't like COVID."

She has tried to occasionally immerse herself in creative outlets as well.

But she said she, too, wanted to return to life without the pandemic and resume everyday activities, like shopping, unrestricted by its public health measures: "I want to get back to normal," said Linda. "I'm fed up with COVID."

Camille Barr, manager of Supported Living for Community Living Huntsville, said resilient staff had worked hard to keep people they support – and each other and themselves – safe and well in a challenging and ever-changing time.

"And keeping, as much as possible, hope and optimism," said Camille.

She noted that meant flexibility in continuously adapting to new ministry COVID-19 recommendations and mandated protocols.

"Staff teams roll with the new regulations that come out, are quick to act on them, and have really maintained that high level of safety for the people that we support, and each other," she said.

So too have the people staff support been resilient in embracing home-based hobbies and activities, and technology to stay virtually connected with family and friends, aided in part by added flexibility in how they could use Developmental Services Ontario Passport funds in the pandemic.

Staff got creative, too, with facilitated window and lawn visits, drive-by celebrations, video chats, and more, to help people maintain friendships and family connection.

"In some cases, it even seemed like there was an increase in some of the family involvement because distance wasn't a factor," said Camille.

But, regardless, the constant shifts in ministry and public health protocols was one of the toughest challenges in the past year. "It's hard," said Camille. "It's a lot to keep up with."

It was also difficult to maintain a cosy home atmosphere when protocols and screening tools were posted on doors, staff members were in full PPE, and public health restrictions hindered community activity. And that was why there was hope on the horizon.

"Everybody looks forward to reengaging with those favourite, familiar community spaces where you're cared about and missed," said Camille.

And the role for the broader community? "Continue to be open, to invite, to reach out," said Camille. "Continue to be welcoming – and patient with each other as we all learn how to reconnect."





Transitional housing initiative offers access to basic human right

Housing is a basic human right.

“And for very important reasons. It is the central site of human life,” said Christopher Jordan-Stevens, supervisor of Supported Independent Living for Community Living Huntsville. “It’s also the central site of community connection.”

But he noted barriers to housing for people supported by the not-for-profit organization had deepened: “Housing has become increasingly unaffordable. ... We’ve also seen huge diminishment of public housing and rent-g geared-to-income housing,” he said. “And a lot of people we support, they are living at or below the poverty line, so they are really struggling to secure independent housing for themselves because they can’t afford to on an ODSP budget. It’s that simple.”

The District of Muskoka’s 2021 Annual Report on its 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan stated Muskoka’s median employment income of roughly \$26,900 is 21 per cent lower than the provincial median of roughly \$33,900. And rental unit vacancy remained low at roughly 1.13 per cent in 2020, a factor in driving up competition and prices. Provincial information states the Ontario Disability Support Program allotment for basic needs and shelter could be \$14,028, annually, though rates vary based on individual circumstances.

Jordan-Stevens said unaffordability was only one barrier. Limited housing near services and transportation that meet people’s needs were others. Without housing, he said, a person loses the stability needed for a full and happy life, and is easily pushed to the periphery of their community. And, given history, housing as a right has added meaning for persons with developmental disabilities.

“People with developmental disabilities, historically, were not treated by government systems as being able to live independently. As a result, many people were institutionalized and segregated – excluded – from their community in really dehumanizing conditions,” he said. “And so, housing has enormous significance for people who are living independently in the community and are labelled with a developmental disability. It shows certain assumptions about people with disabilities are inherently wrong and dangerous.”

Solutions to housing access could include regulation for affordability, community land trusts and co-ops, and an increase in inclusive mixed-income public housing developments on publicly owned land. Much would rely on calls for action to municipal, provincial and federal governments from united community advocates.

Community Living Huntsville, in addition to its long-standing Supported Living and Supported Independent Living services, continued to advocate to all levels of government and remained an active Muskoka Housing Task Force member.

And the not-for-profit launched a transition home

pilot project for low-income young men with developmental disabilities who have experienced periodic or chronic homelessness. The aim is to support tenants in building stability, skills, and connections to transition to permanent housing.

While the first version started roughly two years ago, the current version started in September 2020. The initiative has benefitted from a co-operative and supportive landlord as well as collaboration with the District of Muskoka for rent subsidies and other resources.

“When we give people experiencing homelessness a stable place to stay, and then some support, we’ve actually seen them take great strides in creating stability in their lives. People are getting and maintaining employment, people are getting their mental health taken care of,” said Jordan-Stevens. “Without the stability of a home, none of the support we offer is as effective. We connect people to services, but when people are homeless, connections are hard to make and they often fall through because lives are so unpredictable.”

But the transitional housing model is not ideal: “The ideal, when it comes to addressing homelessness, in my view, is actually giving people access to permanent housing, first, with the right amount of support,” he said. “Research suggests that is the most cost-effective and clinically effective way to end homelessness.”

But attainable permanent housing must first exist: “We have to come together as an entire community,” he said.

Friends Long for a Return to the Links

Margo Cybulski was eager to hit the links – but she and her fellow Community Golf members in Huntsville had to wait.

“I like the fresh air and exercise,” said Margo. “And hitting the ball. It’s a good way to get rid of stress.”

She missed her friends, too.

Community Golf, created and led by community members in collaboration with Deerhurst Resort, has connected golfers labelled with developmental disabilities to volunteer mentors once a week for skills development, fun, and fellowship since 2010.

But the golfers and mentors, who consider themselves friends through the relationships they have built, hadn’t met at Deerhurst’s Lakeside Golf Course for more than a year. The COVID-19 public health crisis, and the restrictions that came with it, put the initiative indefinitely on hiatus in March 2020.

Margo, a dedicated athlete who pre-



Photo provided by Gary Donald

viously competitively bowled with Special Olympics, had to set her golf clubs aside, like many others across Ontario, amid public health concerns and provincial restrictions.

And even as the province allowed golf courses and other outdoor recreational amenities to reopen in May 2021, the Community Golf members and mentors had to continue to wait

until public health restrictions, especially around physical distance, further loosened.

“She misses going, and she misses the companionship,” said Debbie Cybulski, Margo’s mom. “And I think it’s important for them to get out. They don’t get to meet each other very often, and experience and learn new things. And it’s a way to kind of

be independent and do something that is their own.”

Ryan O’Connor, who has golfed with the group from the start, echoed that sentiment.

“I’ve been there to get out of my house. I need exercise, I like the sport and I’ve made some good friends,” said Ryan. “And they (the mentors) are nice to me.”

The hiatus made him sad.

"I feel sad that I've missed out, and I miss my friends," said Ryan. "I would hope that it would start back again because I love playing it and love talking to my friends. They are like family to me."

Gary Donald, who founded the group, and his fellow mentors Roy Miller, Ron Baker, Bob Burrows, Rick Wardell, Tony Bright, and Roy Montgomery were equally eager to relaunch the activity.

Gary first pitched the Community Golf idea to Deerhurst Resort's director of golf after having volunteered with a similar initiative in southern Ontario. Golf, he said, had always offered him, personally, an opportunity to get active, have fun, and meet people, so it seemed the perfect activity.

The resort was immediately on board. "Deerhurst has been phenomenal," said Gary. The resort now volunteered weekly use of the course, carts, practice facilities, and leisure space for Community Golf with a welcoming attitude that mentors said was vital to the initiative's success.

Gary then reached out to Community Living Huntsville with the proposal and soon the inaugural season was underway with four golfers and three mentors. Activities started on the driving range, plus chipping and putting practice, but over the years have evolved to playing a few holes on the course, followed by refreshments and social conversation. There are now eight golfers and six mentors.

The sport, however, seemed mostly a conduit through which the golfers and mentors built natural friendships and meaningful connections.

Roy Miller, one of the founding mentors, said he, personally, embraced golf in retirement largely for socialization – "it allows you to meet new people" – and to keep himself busy. He signed on as a Community Golf mentor for the same reasons.

He had a previous association with Community Living, too, and understood the organization's purpose of fostering inclusiveness for people to live, work, and play in unique and purposeful ways as well.

Even so, Community Golf had a profound effect: "Once it got started, I think it really hit home for the men-

tors because we ended up getting just as much out of it as the golfers did," said Roy.

He said the hiatus felt awful and the restrictions on social interaction over the past year had been difficult for everybody.

Gary agreed: "It's been tough for us, and we're the privileged ones. We are still struggling with the whole idea of not being able to do anything, or go anywhere, or see our grandchildren, et cetera," he said. "And our friends at Community Living are struggling a lot more."

hampered relationships and clouded mental health.

Gary said he hoped to offer alternate physically distanced activities for Community Golf players and mentors until public health measures sufficiently loosened to allow for the close contact they, as a group, needed on the course.

Whatever the decision, provincial and public health measures would be respected by the golfers and mentors. And fun would remain at the core.

"I love playing it and love talking to my friends. They are like family to me."

Advocates, like Community Living Huntsville, noted children and adults labelled with developmental disabilities faced physical and social isolation well before the pandemic struck, and argued provincial and public health restrictions in COVID had set work toward inclusion immeasurably back, as cancelled activities, events and in-person social interaction

"When I set (Community Golf) up, I had 10 steps of learning – how to swing, keep your head down, be respectful – trying to teach ideas," said Gary. "But the final one? 'Have Fun.'"

And Roy agreed that's what it's all about: "Really, golf is the excuse to have fun with our friends," he said.

Note: Community Golf returned to the links in Summer 2021.

'I believe in what Community Living does': Artists for Inclusion

Huntsville artist Marike MacDonald is often inspired by hope – and she donated some to Community Living Huntsville's Artists for Inclusion.

"Each year I decide to donate to a worthy cause, and I believe in what Community Living does," said Marike, a visual artist who works in acrylic or oil on canvas. "I see it as one way I can give back to my community."

The not-for-profit registered charity hosted Artists for Inclusion, an online auction featuring more than 60 one-of-a-kind items donated renowned artists, craftspeople and contributors, from June 14 to 30, 2021. Items were available to view online at galabid.com/clhuntsville and registration was open to all.

Marike, who was raised on a bustling dairy farm in southwestern Ontario, was always enamoured of rural scenes and nature, and felt passionate about art. She had some natural skill, too, possibly inherited from her father, an amateur folk artist.

But with few formal art courses available to her early in life, and an increasingly hectic schedule as she reached adulthood, it wasn't until one of her children started taking art classes in high school that she re-visited her interest: "I was envious," she laughed. "I started drawing again."



And when one of her children visited home about five years ago, and they picked up paintbrushes together to pass the time, she started to fully embrace art as a profession. "I haven't stopped since," she smiled.

She noted the pandemic had helped her focus as an artist and solidify her artistic direction.

Marike donated two original canvases to Artists for Inclusion: *With Arms Outstretched*, and *Open Water*.

With Arms Outstretched was inspired by a tree in

the forest on her property. "I like the tree because it seems to be reaching out in every direction," the artist said. "I had planned to call it 'Hugs' because it is like a mother reaching out to her children to welcome them for hugs."

And she said *Open Water* for her represented hope: "I, as a Christian, feel hope in my life every day, but not everyone does," she said. "So I wanted it to really express the hope that is out there."

There is hope, too, in the work Community Living Huntsville does to support people with develop-

mental disabilities.

Marika recalled a person in her own family who would have benefitted from support to overcome barriers in their daily life. "It affected every part of his being," she said. "I can't help but think that, if he had some assistance, his life would have been so different."

And so she appreciated Community Living's commitment to providing supports and advocacy for people with developmental disabilities, so each may grow to be the decision makers in their own lives at home, school, work, and within the communities of North Muskoka: "I see Community Living as a safe place for people to get compassionate support, if they want it," she said.

Auction items were on public display at Community Living Huntsville's Old Stone Schoolhouse as Location No. 7 on the Huntsville Art Crawl, presented by the Huntsville Festival of the Arts.

And as the online art auction closed for bids, it opened doors for inclusion in North Muskoka.

Jennifer Jerrett, community engagement specialist for Community Living Huntsville, called the not-for-profit organization's first Artists for Inclusion auction "a huge success." The virtual event raised roughly \$6,000 for the organization's innovative Pathways program.

"Although the year has been really difficult for everyone, those who supported and participated

in the auction understood the isolation caused by the COVID pandemic was more difficult for people with developmental disabilities," said Jennifer.

Community Living Huntsville supports 300 children and adults, and their families, in North Muskoka. In addition to its government funded services, it also offers its Pathways program.

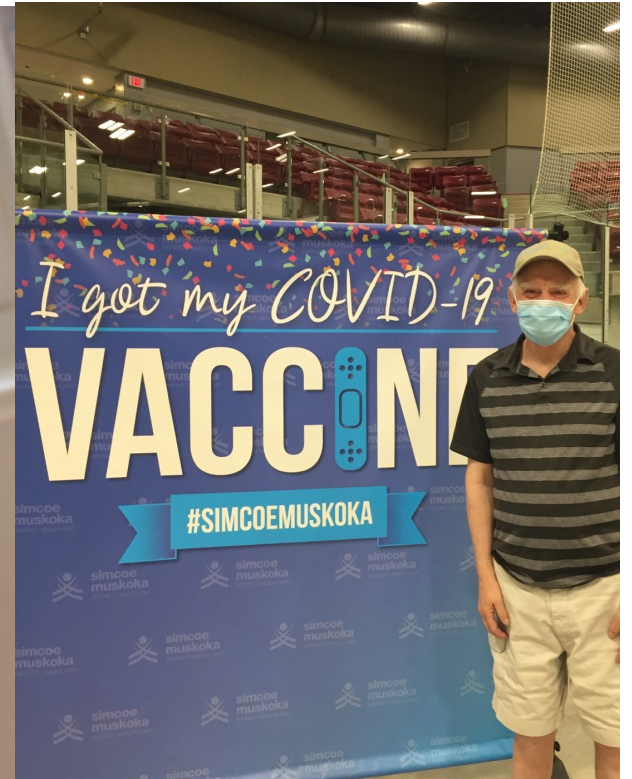
Pathways prevents adults, who are diagnosed with developmental disabilities but deemed ineligible for government funded supports or waitlisted for funds, from falling through the cracks. The program offers free support and services to eligible adults, so they can build the inclusive lives they want in their community.

Community Living Huntsville aims to raise \$150,000 each year to sustain Pathways, which relies solely on donations and fundraised dollars.

Jennifer said she was amazed by the number of artists, craftspeople and contributors who reached out to graciously donate the more than 60 auction items. And what is an auction without bidders? Jennifer also offered her thanks to the generous people who raised their virtual auction paddles for their community.

Note: The financial impact of this event will be reflected in the 2021-2022 annual report.





'I Got My COVID-19 Vaccine'

Spirits were high as we offered a COVID-19 vaccination clinic at our Community Living Huntsville Old Stone Schoolhouse, 99 West Road, for people we support, their essential caregivers, and staff on April 29, 2021.

It felt like hope.

The provincial government had recently broadened vaccination eligibility to include more Ontarians, such as people with developmental disabilities and frontline developmental services staff, which allowed us to host the clinic. In one day, our

staff and the vaccination team supported roughly 80 consenting adults to conveniently access their first vaccine dose with flexibility, accommodating any unique needs and preferences.

The vaccination team included Dr. David Mathies, Pharmacist Dana Murdy, and Paramedic Mike Righetti. And they were top notch.

"I cannot say enough about how gentle and encouraging they were to help ease any nerves," said one staff member.

Add to that the feelings of joy felt by many.

The joy came as people, while wearing masks, keeping physical distance, and waiting for their

shots, reconnected with friends and staff they hadn't seen for a long time because of the pandemic. And there was also joy in knowing the vaccinations moved us one step closer to a return to life without the pandemic.

Smiles could be seen in people's eyes, and laughter heard from behind masks. There was singing, music, joking, and friendship.

Second doses have followed in the months since our clinic. Some received their second shots at the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit vaccine clinic held at Huntsville's Canada Summit Centre and celebrated with a selfie near the health unit's "I Got My COVID-19 Vaccine" selfie banner.





COMMUNITY LIVING
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Inspiring Possibilities

'Our team has been incredible'

It has been a tumultuous year for Community Living Huntsville staff.

Charlene Hofstetter, manager of People and Business Operations for Community Living Huntsville, said the COVID-19 era led a lot of change and transition for many, including our organization.

"Our team has been incredible in working together to balance things off and support each other," said Charlene. "They have been very supportive of the union and management working together to create atypical positions to be able to provide both attractive work with guaranteed hours (and) pay at a higher rate with benefits, while balancing the needs of the organization (and the people we support)."

The pandemic had prompted evolving provincial mandates and public health measures to keep people safe amid the crisis. Safety remained a priority for staff, but restrictions and uncertainty paired with constant change created pressure in a difficult time for people we support, families, and team members alike.

Charlene considered the sheer volume of change one of the biggest challenges of the past year.

"It's been a lot of learning for people, which is positive, but I think the pace of it was challenging," she said.

Change included welcoming new frontline and administrative team members as others bid farewell, and realigning roles to adjust to pandemic realities. Charlene praised frontline direct support professionals for their commitment to their newer colleagues.

"With any new hire coming in, it's the team that is really helping them get a sense of belonging, training them, and answering questions," she said. "Here's a shout out to the direct support professionals who are really helping their new team members feel comfortable with their roles, and feel part of the team."

The administrative team in the People and Business Operations department faced its share of staff change, too, amid significant departmental projects, like the ongoing rollout of a new platform called GoEasyCare to combine scheduling, StaffStat, payroll, and human resources systems.

"The team has managed incredibly well," said Charlene. "Everybody has stepped up, been understanding of why we are doing things, or asked questions to understand why, and really worked together to support their team members."

She noted the department has new faces working alongside established staff and everyone had strengths to complement each other.

Note: Charlene bid farewell to Community Living Huntsville in August 2021 after accepting a position with the District of Muskoka. We wish her all the best.



2020–2021 Financial Summary

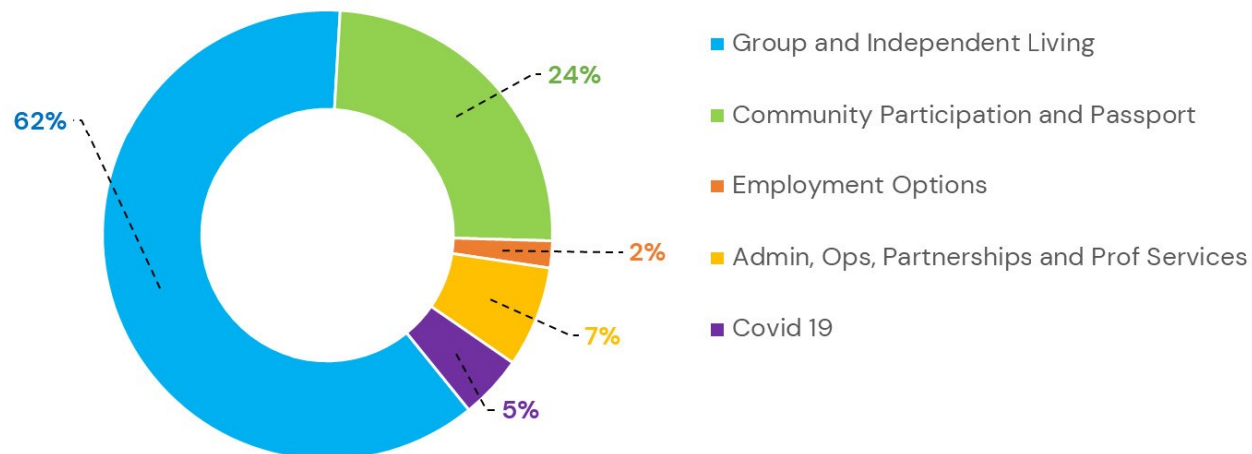
Few people expected the COVID-19 pandemic and its often physically, socially, and emotionally difficult restrictions to still be part of our daily reality. But our staff, especially those on the front line, through hard work and flexibility have continuously and selflessly dedicated themselves as essential service providers to keeping the people we support, and themselves, safe in these uncertain times.

Ministry, public health, and our own protocols guided all of our decisions – and every decision has focused on keeping people safe. Operational disruptions, such as a staffing shortage, saw team members from different departments redeployed to meet a dire need in residential supports and their commitment is so appreciated. Further, limits on community-based activities forced a shift to online programs and we thank the people we support, and their families and caregivers, too, for their patience and understanding.

We, fortunately, received one-time funding from the ministry to help offset some COVID-19 related expenses.

It remains unclear how long pandemic-related disruptions will continue, but we stand committed to safety and resilience as we work through them. And when the pandemic ends there will be more work ahead, as we strive to undo the damage to community inclusion caused by isolation.

Where Our Money Goes



\$6,017,111

Total Revenue

\$5,958,494

Total Expenses

REVENUE	2020-2021	%	2019-2020	%
Province of Ontario	\$ 4,820,137.00	80.11%	\$ 4,497,586.00	81.86%
Other Funding Sources	\$ 881,337.00	14.65%	\$ 864,761.00	15.74%
COVID 19 Funding	\$ 267,257.00	4.44%	\$ -	0.00%
Fundraising and Other Income	\$ 48,380.00	0.80%	\$ 131,931.00	2.40%
TOTAL	\$ 6,017,111.00	100.00%	\$ 5,494,278.00	100.00%
EXPENSES	2020-2021	%	2019-2020	%
Salaries and Benefits	\$ 3,683,002.00	61.81%	\$ 3,556,693.00	59.69%
Program, Operating and Professional Expenses	\$ 1,996,707.00	33.51%	\$ 1,744,284.00	28.99%
COVID 19 Expenses	\$ 276,917.00	4.65%	\$ 54,156.00	0.90%
Fundraising Costs and Other Expenditures	\$ 1,868.00	0.03%	\$ 80,608.00	1.34%
TOTAL	\$ 5,958,494.00	100.00%	\$ 5,435,741.00	100.00%
Excess of Revenues over Expenses	\$ 58,617.00		\$ 58,537.00	

To request a copy of Community Living Huntsville's full 2020-2021 financial report, please email clh@clhuntsville.ca.



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