

# HAPPENINGS

Dream • Inspire • Belong



## A MESSAGE FROM ALEXANDRA

WELCOME TO THE LATEST EDITION OF HAPPENINGS!

I hope you are enjoying this fall season. As we look back on the past few months, we are happy to share with you our updates and initiatives that have further enriched our journey at Community Living Oakville.

We were honoured and privileged to recently meet the esteemed musical artist Bif Naked, whose inspiring words about female leadership and unwavering dedication to social causes deeply resonated with us. Bif's visit was inspiring and our conversations together, reinforced our commitment to fostering inclusivity and empowerment for all. We eagerly anticipate the possibility of seeing her again in the near future and extend our heartfelt gratitude for the time she spent with us. If you would like to learn more about Bif Naked, be sure to visit her Instagram page [@bifnakedofficial](#).

In line with our mission to maximize community opportunities and inclusion, along with no longer requiring such a large building - we have made the decision to place our main office location at 301 Wycroft up for sale. While this space has been an integral part of our journey, we recognize the importance of adapting to the evolving needs of our organization. As we seek a smaller footprint for our administrative and management operations, we remain committed to optimizing our resources to ensure the effective delivery of our services. Stay tuned for more updates once we secure a new location.

September proved to be a busy month as we successfully hosted our annual golf tournament and had our annual general meeting. We extend our sincerest appreciation to our sponsors, donors, guests, and dedicated volunteers whose support made our tournament a resounding success. Your unwavering commitment and generosity continue to drive our mission forward, empowering us to create meaningful impact within our community. Please mark your calendars and be sure to join us for our next golf tournament to be held on June 11th, 2024.

In an effort to foster closer connections and facilitate meaningful discussions, we hosted our inaugural Family Group meeting at the end of September. Our first meeting, provided an invaluable platform for sharing agency updates and discussing our collective goals. We eagerly anticipate the positive outcomes that will emerge from this collaborative effort, as we work tirelessly to enhance our services and strengthen our community ties.

Additionally, our advocacy efforts continue as we strive to secure necessary resources and supports for people with changing needs. We are actively engaging with the ministry to ensure that the people we support receive the comprehensive assistance required to lead fulfilling lives.

We also wanted to share with you a monumental moment in Community Living Oakville's history. On October 31st, 2023 we will say goodbye to many longstanding staff at Best Pack, as our social enterprise comes to an end. Best Pack, owned and operated by Community Living Oakville opened its doors in 1984, providing employment training opportunities for people we supported along with hiring many skilled staff from our community. In the recent years we have experienced more uncertainty in the business world, including procurement of supplies and contracts. Hence, the decision was made to step away from this operation. As of November 1st, 2023, Best Pack will be under new ownership and Community Living Oakville will



continue to focus its efforts on community inclusion; ensuring quality supports and services. We would like to extend a special thank you to Ivan Bogdanovski, Business Manager along with all of the Best Pack staff for their hard work and efforts these past years. Please be sure to read more about Best Pack within this newsletter, please see page 10.

Lastly, as we embark on our strategic planning process, we are excited to involve our community in shaping the future of Community Living Oakville. Through data collection and interactive focus groups, we aim to develop a robust strategic plan that will guide our endeavors from 2024 to 2027. Your active participation and feedback will be invaluable in shaping our collective journey ahead.

We encourage you to stay connected with us through our social media channels for the latest updates and developments. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us if you have any questions or are interested in becoming a part of our mission. Together, we can continue to build a more inclusive and supportive community for all.

With warm regards,

Alexandra Hoeck-Murray  
Executive Director



Another season has come and gone; who can believe it is already Fall? Summer was a whirlwind of fun for people who attended Xcel: people hit the beach, Safaris, art studios, went on hikes, checked out conservation areas, fairs, Dufferin Islands, Niagara Falls, Niagara on the Lake, Toronto and more.

As we head into the cooler months, people tend to move indoors, so we saved the indoor events for winter. At Xcel, we will continue to do as many activities as we can outdoors until the cold temperatures reach us. Once that happens, we will keep busy doing such things as going to the movies, museums, art studios, indoor sports, and much more.

At Xcel we create opportunities for people to be part of their communities. Each day people are out participating in community life, building on skills, independence, while creating and fostering friendships.



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IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW ARE LOOKING FOR  
DAYTIME OPPORTUNITIES,  
XCEL MAY BE THE PLACE FOR YOU!

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT XCEL, PLEASE CONTACT:  
[JULIE.BISBICOS@OAKCL.ORG](mailto:JULIE.BISBICOS@OAKCL.ORG)

## SUMMER PREP GIVES STUDENTS A TASTE OF THE WORKFORCE



Summer PREP is a six-week program that runs throughout the summer, working with students who have a developmental disability and who all have a common goal: to advance their future by gaining workplace skills. The pre-employment training program is held in a classroom setting two days a week, where students learn employable traits and skills; however, the learning and engaging doesn't just prevail in the classroom, but also extends to the community within volunteer opportunities.

This year, Summer PREP partnered with the Glen Abbey Community Centre, Chartwell Christopher Terrace Retirement Residence, The Salvation Army Thrift Store, and St. Christopher's Anglican Church for volunteer opportunities for students. These meaningful experiences provided students the opportunity to discover and engage in career exploration, develop and build skills and foster relationships with others, ultimately impacting their future career paths.

Although summer came to an end far too soon, we would like to thank the students and community partners, specifically Service Canada - Canada Summer Jobs funding, for making this summer program possible. Thank you for being supportive in advancing the career skills and strengths of these youth!



## TEEN ADVENTURES PART 2- SUPPORTING LOCAL YOUTH



The Teen Adventure Program (TAP) is a joint venture between CLO and the Town of Oakville. For the second summer in a row, this partnership has been an incredible initiative that provides local youth, who have developmental disabilities, a variety of exciting and enriching experiences during the summer months. The adventures include swimming, rock climbing, art, games, & live music recordings, offering a diverse range of activities for participating youth.

The dedication and support from Direct Support Professionals at Community Living Oakville, working alongside Town of Oakville staff, are commended for their help in ensuring TAP was a success. Such partnerships are vital for the well-being and development of young people in our community.

The enthusiastic youth that joined had a fantastic time. It's wonderful to know that the collaboration between Community Living Oakville and the Town of Oakville will continue, and everyone is looking forward to more opportunities for youth next summer. This partnership demonstrates a commitment to fostering positive, inclusive experiences and growth among youth with developmental disabilities and it's something to be celebrated!

Cheers to this fantastic collaboration and the boundless adventures it brings to the community!

# CELEBRATING A GRAND SLAM SEASON- COMMUNITY LIVING OAKVILLE HITTING IT OUT OF THE PARK!

We are thrilled to share the fantastic news of yet another successful season of baseball, made possible by the incredible partnership between Halton agencies (CLO, CLB, CLNH & Bob Rumble) and the Jays Care Foundation. The summer 2023 season was filled with cheers, camaraderie and unforgettable moments on the diamond.

Every Wednesday throughout the summer, the baseball fields came alive with the spirited competition between Community Living Oakville, Community Living North Halton, Community Living Burlington and Bob Rumble Canadian Center of Excellence for the Deaf. The friendly matches not only highlighted the talents and sportsmanship of our players, but also fostered a sense of community and friendships.

None of this would have been possible without the unwavering support of our partners. A colossal thank you is owed to the Jays Care Foundation, for once again, stepping up to the plate and providing all the necessary baseball equipment. Their commitment to fostering positive change through baseball has been instrumental in creating these cherished opportunities for our community.

We also extend our heartfelt gratitude to our local heroes, the Oakville Lions Club, for their generous donation of jerseys and their contribution to our field rental. Their support has not only adorned our players with pride, but also played a vital role in ensuring that our community can continue to enjoy the love of the game.

A special shout-out to our dedicated coaches, Cody Prevett, Nic Walters, Pam Garden & Laura Ferrier. Your tireless efforts, dedication and passion have not only improved the skills of the players, but also instilled the values of teamwork & sportsmanship. Your commitment to the success of this season is truly appreciated.

Therefore, as the sun sets on the 2023 baseball season, we reflect on the smiles, laughter and friendships forged on the diamond. We remain dedicated to creating inclusive spaces where everyone can thrive, and partnerships like these, with the Jays Care Foundation and Oakville Lions Club are instrumental in bringing this vision to life.

Here's to a season of home runs, teamwork and community spirit! Links to some social media highlights:

- [Thank you to Zach from Jays Care Foundation](#)
- [End of season baseball tournament](#)



**JAYS CARE**  
FOUNDATION



## COMMUNITY LIVING OAKVILLE'S 37TH ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT



On Thursday September 7th, Community Living Oakville held our 37th Annual Golf Tournament at Piper's Heath Golf Club. Our Morning Ladies '9 & Dine' and Afternoon 18-hole tournaments brought over 250 golfers and guests in attendance throughout the day. Together we raised a net total of \$88,000 for The Outcomes Fund. Although this year's event had less participants and sponsors, we are excited for what this funding will help us achieve and we couldn't be more grateful and appreciative of the tremendous support from our community and friends!

At Community Living Oakville we want to continuously strive to support people to achieve any of the 21 outcomes on the world-renowned Personal Outcome Measures® tool that is used to measure quality of life and ensure supports and services are truly person-centered. With the funds raised at this year's golf tournament, The Outcomes Fund was created which will make it possible for more 'positive outcomes' to be present in the lives of the people we support where financial barriers can be a factor. The generosity and support from this year's event will increase sustainability and promote further independence for people we support even after the funds have ended, as each person will be provided with tools and resources to continue to build upon their goals and outcomes.



Ronald and Marty Copland, brothers in our Supported Living programs (with support from Jennifer Dance, Manager of Quality Enhancement) shared their story with attendees. Marty, the younger brother (by just a year!) has been receiving support with CLO for 34 years. He has utilized many of our services over the years, such as housing supports and Community Participation Supports. He is well known within CLO and his community and beloved by many. Marty's older brother, Ronald, is new to the Oakville area. Just over a year ago, Ronald decided that it was time to leave the family home and establish his own independence. Before Ronald moved to Oakville, Marty and Ronald lived their entire adult life only seeing each other 2-3 times a year during special family engagements; now they are only a mere 15-minute walk from each other and can spend time together multiple times a week!



To learn more about The Outcomes Fund and the tremendous difference it makes in the lives of all involved, watch our 2023 Reception Video. While we receive much of our funding from the government, many of the programs and services we offer rely heavily on fundraising initiatives, the largest of which is this annual golf tournament. We cannot thank our generous sponsors and donors, enthusiastic golfers, dedicated volunteers and hardworking employees enough for making this year's event an incredible success!

If you are interested in more information or would like to get more involved, please contact Andrea Interior, Development Manager at [andrea.interior@oakcl.org](mailto:andrea.interior@oakcl.org).

## SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS FOR MAKING THIS EVENT POSSIBLE



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On behalf of our organization,  
 the many people we support  
 and their families, thank you  
 again from the bottom of our  
 hearts for making this year's  
 tournament a success!

## REAWAKENING THE SENSES: CELEBRATING CULTURAL DIVERSITY

A growing understanding of cultural diversity is something many people enjoy. For Thorne, Julie, Scott, Ryan and Harrison during the Summer of 2023 this was an opportunity to celebrate the easing of restrictions, brought on by the pandemic. It was a welcome opportunity to get out and mingle with society as we started back along the pathway to normalcy when we could see people and experience the colours, sights and sounds of diversity and culture.

We are told the origin of the word *powwow* comes from the Algonquin word *pau-wau*, which means "medicine man" or "he who dreams." Early European settlers changed it to the English spelling we use now – *powwow*.

In Canada we celebrate National Indigenous History Month every June and recognize National Indigenous Peoples Day on June 21. Eager to embrace cultural experience and join in the celebration, Julie, Scott, Thorne, Ryan and Harrison along with their support staff, attended a Powwow. They were warmly welcomed by the First Nations, and delighted with the sounds, and all the colours of the dress. They paid tribute to the spirit of that month and the acknowledgement of the day by being present and not letting the time pass without touching in on the cultural experience.

Music Africa is a not-for-profit community-based organization that promotes African music in Toronto through its annual flagship music festival AFROFEST. The organization was established in 1990. Its objective is promoting African music in Canada. Through its activities and events, it is committed to enhancing appreciation and awareness of African music among Canadians. Ryan and his peers attended AFROFEST where again they were able to immerse themselves in the powerful cultural experience - the craft colours, sounds and expand the cultural horizons. The event was met with curiosity and the benefit of trying something new – that may open up a novel avenue of interest.



During the August long weekend, over a million tourists are expected in Toronto to experience everything Carnival has to offer. The colour vibrancy and excitement of the Caribbean festival in Toronto celebrates diversity and the varied audience. It draws in everyone from families across Canada and the U.S. This summer Julie and Harrison attended – and from the pictures and expressions on their faces, they had a wonderful time again, enjoying the music, sounds of the Caribbean and the vibrant insignias, which were especially welcome after living within the safety of congregate care during the pandemic. The pulsating energetic colourful sparkling costumes and floats sealed the sounds of the Caribbean in invigorating memories of the day.



The pandemic was tough – draining and trying – but the colours – sounds and echoes of these events were a welcome promise that we just may be back on the way to a semblance of the life withheld from us in March 2020. Julie, Scott, Thorne, Ryan, Harrison were determined to be a part of this opportunity to re-emerge and re-awaken their senses & demonstrate their spirit and zest for life.

## TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

September 30, 2021, marked the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, a day that coincides with Orange Shirt Day. The tribute recognizes the tragic legacy of residential schools, the missing children, the families left behind and the survivors of those institutions.

Public commemoration of the tragic and painful history and ongoing effects of residential schools is a vital component of the reconciliation process.

There were 140 federally run residential schools in Canada that operated between 1867 and as late as 1996. As societal enlightenment and group attitudes changed and for our country to become a better place, horrific actions of the past had to be addressed, so that progress could be achieved.

In this multifaceted scenario, the questions were always: how do we move forward? How do we address the wrongs of the past and deal with the hurt and tragedy in order to free society from this burden, so that we can continue to grow and progress?

The evidence, including commentary from those with direct experience of the system, were horrific and unimaginable.

When one looks out the school window today, the yards are full of colour, colourful play structures, maintained greenspace, maybe fields for sports. When looking out through windows of a former residential school, one sees something out of place in a conventional school... Cemeteries.

As society becomes a more enlightened place, the question always becomes, 'How do we make restitution?' Quite often thoughts drift almost naturally to retribution and punishment. Even though the perpetrators have long since vanished into oblivion leaving the scars for the future generation to deal with. Instead of punishment, some nations have reached very, very deep within their sorrow - driven by a powerful desire to end the hurt, and embrace the concept of truth, and start the journey to reconciliation.

In exchange for the truth and acknowledgement of the pain and suffering that cannot be quantified... there is forgiveness. An unusual flower that can bloom into a mighty tree of hope for humanity.



Alongside their truth, there is also the long history of the way people who have a developmental disability were treated while along their journey to inclusion. The world was once an unwelcoming place but thanks to pioneers at the time, one can hope, there is a credible system to protect us from making the same mistakes.

With the closure of Institutions in Ontario for people who have a developmental disability – finally on March 31, 2009. We may be able to draw parallels in the history of the Residential Schools and the way in which people who have a developmental disability once lived.

The day of Truth and Reconciliation is a reminder and should not just be another day of remembrance and acknowledgment. It is a reminder that we are all at risk of falling into patterns that create dysfunctional systems. A pattern that could harm people who have no choice but to look for 'credible systems' to protect them.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to the world and all the families and their children, who were injured by the residential school system as we continue the social battles to create a more enlightened, inclusive world.

# ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS

Best Pack has a long, deep association with Oakville and Community Living Oakville. For decades, past society grappled with the fragile emergent idea of how best to support citizens with developmental disabilities. What would become the movement of



Community Living, started at a time when parents decided institutionalization was not an option. Home-based schools were established by dedicated parents who felt something different was necessary.

As people matured, they needed accommodation, and as they left school – into a system that was a blank ominous slate, they needed work. The notion of a workshop developed where there was nothing. At a time when everything was being achieved through pioneering efforts, a concept such as a ‘workshop’ was a welcoming boon.

Labour theorists always told us work is vital to our identity. In Oakville, the cycle of a sheltered workshop with unpaid labour was snapped by David Yawney. A practical man and tradesman from Northern Ontario who saw decades ahead – people needed more to their lives. David wanted to see people receive a competitive wage and produce what would be valued and needed. He started Best Pack as a successful social enterprise which continues to be endorsed by people supported through Community Living Oakville.

The packaging company serviced commercial needs of customers from small to branded commercial companies. People we support recognized these corporate brands with pride when they shopped at stores in their community. The community was no longer a place with an invisible barrier – people identified how their work produced real outcomes and had definition and meaning.

Quality control was impeccable. People completed the packaging and sealing along a competitive cooperative line. The chatter and bickering was nostalgic as people shaped their identities. Best Pack helped our collective understanding that people with a disability are some of the best employees industry can hire.

David would cut, adjust and perfect the mold casting for the packaging. His synchronized team then set about transferring the arriving product into branded thermal-sealed packages, shipped to vendors everywhere. Overflow work went to day service areas that gladly welcomed the tasks throughout Community Living Oakville’s service.

Employees in a novel integrated workforce – where people worked alongside peers without disabilities and assembled product displays destined for retailers across the GTA and beyond. Best Pack was Community Living Oakville’s independently owned packaging business, where adults with development disabilities engaged in competitive work for competitive pay. A successful revenue-generating – self-sustaining business with a social mission. Revenue was steered back into the agency to purchase homes and other big-ticket items – like vans to connect people with their community. For someone working at Best Pack, their employment meant independence.

At the other end of the warehouse, was testament to our longstanding relationship with Ford Canada – one of the first major companies to outsource with Best Pack. In a world not yet ready for the demand for inclusion – Best Pack was ahead of its time, offering stepping stones to greater independence.

The legendary and treasured self-advocate – Patrick Worth, started his employment at Best Pack. Oakville, under his leadership, had one of the very first People First chapters in Canada. Pat went on to do great things, but David Yawney always remembered: ‘Pat was more of a politician than someone who enjoyed working with his hands.’ David recalled the Oakville resident started his journey at Best Pack, to become arguably one of the greatest leaders in Ontario – Canada – even the world. Pat advocated tirelessly for understanding to create a more welcoming world, where the loneliness and isolation affecting people with a developmental disability needed to be understood.

The two ventures – Best Pack and Community Living Oakville were indistinguishable and, in many ways, a perfect benefit to one another. The social mandate of Community Living Oakville benefited from the business operations of a company which had to fend for itself to survive. Best Pack had to attract and retain contracts – operate in different economic cycles and focus on customer satisfaction and quality control in a competitive world that was not as forgiving as people we support. Those perspectives, like a brilliant diamond, formed perfect facets of understanding that benefitted the whole of both companies in unfathomable ways.

Following David's hard work, Lois took on the helm for several years to continue the important work and service. After her departure, Ivan Bogdanovski took on the challenge and shepherded the operation along with the Board.

It is perhaps with timely sadness and many memories of a united spirit; the two companies will go their separate ways with Best Pack, embracing the opportunity to establish her independence.

It is limiting to understand the separation as 'the end of an era'. This was no era – but one could fall into the pitfall of that understanding in the absence of a more suitable analogy. *Nanos gigantum humeris insidentes* (Latin) is more fitting – first appearing in the humble writings of Sir Isaac Newton.

Today we 'stand on the shoulders of giants', who went before. So that we may continue the progress and reap the success of their efforts to make the world a better place. Wishing our friends and comrades at Best Pack ongoing success in your new journey.



## WE CAME, WE RAISED, WE PULLED

Our CLO Team was extremely excited that the United Way Halton and Hamilton Plane Pull has returned after a 4-year hiatus. The community came together and showed that when we all pull together, amazing things are possible – such as moving a 200,000lb plane 50 meters across the tarmac.

Raising funds for the essential services provided by UWHH, Team CLO put together a rock star team filled with energy and passion for the September 16th event.

Julie, Harrison, Thorne, Ryan, Scott and their support team joined the event and conquered their plane pull as well!

[Check out the highlights](#) of a fun morning as our team got in the spirit of giving back and represented CLO!





“As I headed back to Oakville, I knew I was bringing back with me a renewed commitment to advocating for inclusivity and the rights of people who have a Developmental Disability. I will continue on this journey and will share my new knowledge with the Board of Directors at Community Living Oakville.”

## KAITLIN CONQUERS OTTAWA

**WRITTEN BY KAITLIN NESBITT  
CLO BOARD MEMBER & PERSON SUPPORTED**

On September 26th, I travelled to Ottawa for 4 days to attend Community Living Ontario’s Inspiring Possibilities AGM & Conference 2023. The (long) drive was vibrant with the new colours of fall descending on the trees and upon arriving in Ottawa, I was immediately captivated by the charm of its streets and was eager to immerse myself in the Inspiring Possibilities Conference and the culture of the Nation’s Capital.

I have never been to Ottawa before and I wanted to experience the local flair, so we ventured into the historic Byward Market. The lively atmosphere was brimming with vendors and artisans: from fresh produce to handmade crafts. It was so cool to witness!



Once we hit the grounds of the Parliament Buildings, I could not help but feel a sense of awe and gratitude for the democratic process that unfolded within those walls. When I exercise my Right to Vote – I am possibly voting for the person to represent Canada in THIS building. I just couldn’t believe it; I was standing on the same ground as many Prime Ministers before us. It was surreal to me.

I also caught a glimpse of the Supreme Court of Canada, the magnificence of the building stood solemnly in the distance with the significance of the decisions made within – where justice reigns, I felt pretty awesome to be Canadian.

However, the highlight of my trip was the Inspiring Possibilities 2023 Conference organized by Community Living Ontario. Focused on empowering people with developmental disabilities, the conference brought together a diverse array of speakers and attendees. The Ottawa Event and Conference Centre buzzed with the energy of like-minded people committed to creating a more inclusive society. I was able to see so many people I haven’t seen in years and re-connect with the Council members at Community Living Ontario.

Workshops and presentations covered a range of topics from Accessible Technology to reviewing “Journey to Belonging”. I was inspired by the stories of resilience and triumph by those who faced similar challenges head on. The conference was a space not only for learning, but also for fostering connections and a sense of community.

# SOCIAL CONNECTION MEETS BEST POSSIBLE HEALTH



To improve her health, and increase her social connections with people, Claudia decided she would like to start a walking club for people supported through CLO in May. She was interested in getting people together after spending too many days in isolation as a result of the pandemic. Her hope was to get people active and engaged, both physically and socially, enjoy the warmer weather together, and have a regular event to look forward to every week.

At first, Claudia and her support staff began walking together on Tuesday mornings. Slowly but surely word got out, and Claudia began to get other groups interested in joining. By the end of the summer, there was a group of people waiting in the parking lot for her to start her walks every Tuesday. This walk was accessible for anyone supported regardless of physical abilities. Some people enjoyed walking fast and others took their time, but the walk was much more than a means of getting some extra steps in. Claudia's walks provided a space for people to come and get to know one another, make conversation, experience the beautiful nature at Bronte Harbour, have some laughs, and create new friendships.

The walks turned out to be a huge success this year and she is looking forward to starting them back up again in the Spring of 2024!



## CLO BACK AT QUEEN'S PARK



Our Executive Director, Chair of the Board and Director of Finance had the opportunity to meet with Minister Parsa and Parliamentary Assistant, Logan Kanapathi, earlier this month. We are thankful for their time and ongoing advocacy for the developmental services sector and people we support.

# THANKSGIVING AT CLO



Thanksgiving is a time most often celebrated with delicious food, good company, and giving thanks. While this holiday may hold a different significance for everyone, many of us choose to spend it with the people we cherish most.

This year we would like to share some of the memories created from this past Thanksgiving.

“

**I AM HAPPY BECAUSE I'M GRATEFUL. I CHOOSE TO BE GRATEFUL. THAT GRATITUDE ALLOWS ME TO BE HAPPY.**

”

**WILL ARNETT**

## FAMILY GROUP

We are excited to announce the establishment of Community Living Oakville's Family Group. Our initial meeting was a success and we couldn't be more excited about the positive impact we anticipate this group will deliver.

The Family Group was formed with the goal of creating a strong and supportive network for families, caregivers and people supported. We recognize the importance of coming together to share experiences, insight, and knowledge all while enhancing person centered support and improving the quality of life of people who are supported by CLO. The group represents the diverse voices of Community Living Oakville's family members and serves as a communication bridge as well as a resource for families.

As part of our commitment to keeping everyone informed and engaged, we will be providing regular updates through this newsletter.

Here's what you can expect to find in upcoming editions:

- Meeting highlights
- Event announcements
- Education, training resources and support
- Success stories
- Opportunities for community engagement

We are grateful for the group members' participation and enthusiasm in making this group a success and we look forward to fostering a sense of community and support.

If you are interested in learning more about the Family Group or have suggestions or ideas, please contact Shannon Douglas, Engagement and Training Coordinator at [shannon.douglas@oakcl.org](mailto:shannon.douglas@oakcl.org).

# THE LEGEND NEVER DIES: MARLO BILATTO

## SEPTEMBER 28, 2000 - JULY 2, 2023

On July 2, 2023, we said a tearful goodbye to Marlo Bilatto; a remarkable young man who left an unforgettable mark on all those fortunate enough to know him. Marlo's journey is a testament to the power of determination and the unwavering support of a community that truly believes in the principle of #DreamInspireBelong.

Marlo's story is one that speaks to the resilience of the human spirit. Marlo's career path began when he attended Project Search. His journey reached a significant milestone when he was supported by CLO's Xplore Employment to secure a job at the Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital. Marlo's presence radiated positivity, and his colleagues soon realized that he was not just an employee but a source of inspiration. His work ethic was unwavering, his smile infectious, and his presence heartwarming. Marlo's contribution to the hospital went beyond his daily tasks; he became a symbol of the community's commitment to inclusion and diversity.

But what truly sets Marlo apart is the legacy he leaves behind, encapsulated in his favorite quote, 'the legend never dies.' Marlo's legacy is a testament to the impact people can have, regardless, or maybe because of, the barriers they may have faced. His legacy lives on in the lives he touched, in the minds he opened, and in the hearts he warmed. Marlo taught us all that our dreams, no matter how big or small, are achievable with perseverance and the support of a community that believes in the potential of every person.



Marlo's mother, Elizabeth Cena, is an Employment Specialist with Xplore Employment and wrote the following poem in Marlo's honour:

#### OUR ETERNAL GUIDE

In loving memory of Marlo, a spirit so bright,  
 Whose sudden departure brought darkness and night.  
 Though your journey ended in unforeseen sorrow,  
 Your memory lives on in every tomorrow.  
 You've shown us the power of living each day,  
 With purpose and passion, in your own unique way.  
 Your presence was a gift so rare,  
 With a heart so full of compassion and care.  
 You've taught us to live with honour and zest,  
 To follow our dreams and give it our best.  
 To cherish the moments, both big and small,  
 To be kind, to help others, and to love above all.  
 As you blazed through life, you were authentic and real,  
 Inspiring others with your heart's appeal.  
 Your laughter echoed, so infectious and bright,  
 Bringing warmth and joy, like a beacon of light.  
 Even though your flame may have flickered away,  
 The impact you've made will forever stay.  
 In the stories we share, the memories we hold,  
 Your inspiration will continue to unfold.  
 So let us remember you with love and grace,  
 Embracing life's challenges, at our own pace.  
 For you, our dear Marlo, shall forever reside,  
 In our hearts, in our souls, our eternal guide.



# MAKING A DIFFERENCE - KELSIE

## AN INSPIRING JOURNEY OF COMPASSION AND DEDICATION



Kelsie's journey with Community Living Oakville began in 2021, when she joined as an agency staff member. From the outset, she displayed remarkable enthusiasm for her role, finding immense joy in supporting people, witnessing the beauty of people spending time together, and exploring not only their community but also the world. The opportunity to provide others with experiences, education, and exposure became her driving force.

After a year of dedicated service, Kelsie realized the limitations of her role. Undeterred, she approached Jody Blaauw, Supported Living Manager, seeking a way to do more. This marked the beginning of a transformative phase in her career, and she formally joined the CLO team. With an innate desire to create genuine connections and foster a sense of belonging, Kelsie began planning meaningful trips for the people she supports. One memorable adventure was accompanying Julie and Scott to the awe-inspiring Niagara Falls, a journey etched in the hearts of all involved.

Kelsie's impact, however, goes far beyond organizing trips. She possesses a Bachelor's Degree in Nursing, a qualification that intertwines with her role, making her a beacon of expertise. In her own words, "The work that I do with Community Living Oakville has really impacted me, making me a better nurse. I've learned the impact of making real connections with people."

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"There is growing reliance on training, learning, and 'professionalization' of supports we provide people. However, a vital part of the configuration of an effective staff cannot be taught – it is innate. Empathy, compassion, a desire for inclusion and belonging, dignity, and the pursuit of the best possible life despite barriers someone may face – these are some of those qualities. Kelsie embodies these innate values. She lives and breathes Personal Outcomes, demonstrating an unwavering commitment to the best for the people she supports."

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Kelsie's dedication is evident in her spontaneous acts of kindness, from planning getaways for people with high support needs to celebrating birthdays in extraordinary ways. Her selflessness knows no bounds. In her role as Direct Support Professional, she is a memory-maker, a catalyst for joy, and a trusted companion in every sense.

Her interest in health and well-being ensures that the people she supports, especially those who communicate in a non-traditional manner, receive person centered and responsive support. Kelsie thrives not only on the success of the people she supports, but also on the collaborative efforts within her team. She understands the vital role families play and recognizes the harmonious coexistence of individual needs, team dynamics, family aspirations, and community connections.

Kelsie, your journey is a testament to the enduring spirit of compassion and dedication. Your ability to make a difference seems effortless, yet it ripples through the lives you touch, leaving a legacy of kindness and transformation. Continue this remarkable path, Kelsie. You make making a difference an art, and for that, we are profoundly grateful.

# PROJECT SEARCH THE START



As we enter our 5th year of Project Search at Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital, we are pleased to welcome a bright new group of interns to our program. As always, we immediately launched into training to develop employment skills and explore potential for the future. We are fortunate to have a lovely classroom at the hospital which has proven time and again to be more than just a classroom; but a home away from home where a unique community is built.

In the early days of our program, we incorporate many activities to get to know each other and find our way around a sometimes confusing hospital. Our outdoor and indoor scavenger hunt is always a big hit with our interns as we socialize, while also building a mental map of what can be a frightening new learning environment. It's a new start for everyone in many ways.

The start of a new experience like this can be a time for tremendous personal growth and development. Interns have the chance to reflect on – and extract value from – their previous experiences, set new personal goals, and work on self-improvement.

The start of a new experience is a chance to come together with teachers, hospital staff, and fellow interns to nurture a supportive and inclusive environment. It's an opportunity to work collaboratively to ensure everyone's success.

The start of a new experience is an opportunity to make new friends and strengthen existing connections to expand our networks. The hospital environment provides a unique space for social interaction, collaboration, and the formation of lifelong bonds. Students can look forward to meeting diverse individuals with unique perspectives and experiences, all within a safe environment.

Although we are all still getting to know each other, in the months ahead we will have many encouraging stories of success to share as our interns grow in skill and confidence toward the ultimate goal of increased independence and employment. The potential for growth and success is within reach – this is just the start.

## FAMILY CORNER

It's hard to believe the Holiday Season is just around the corner! Keep a lookout in the coming weeks for more information on our seasonal fundraisers including our Annual Holiday Appeal as well as our first Giving Tuesday campaign. We're also excited to bring our Annual Golf Tournament back to the spring season – Save the Date!

For more information, reach out to Andrea Interior, Development Manager: [andrea.interior@oakcl.org](mailto:andrea.interior@oakcl.org).



# WHAT I LOVE ABOUT MY JOB

*"It gives me an opportunity to support individuals who remind me every day how to appreciate the simpler things in life more"*

*"The joy of making a meaningful impact on people's lives and promoting inclusion and diversity is what keeps me inspired and motivated every day."*

*"Every day at Community Living Oakville, I get to witness the incredible strength and resilience of the people we support. It's a source of inspiration for me."*

*"Being part of this team means advocating for people with developmental disabilities, and that's a mission I'm proud to be a part of."*

*"Our work at Community Living Oakville isn't just a job; it's a calling to create a more inclusive world for everyone. I'm honoured to be a part of it."*

*"At Community Living Oakville, we're a family. Together, we empower and uplift the dreams and choices of the people we support. It's a beautiful journey."*

*"At Community Living Oakville, I get to watch my teams, each day, ensure each person they are supporting are living their life to the fullest, it's incredible to witness such dedication & passion!"*

## THANK YOU

This year marked the 32nd Anniversary of CUMIS Apple Day – a day in which local CUMIS and Co-operators employees harvest apples and donate to local community organizations. Community Living Oakville was fortunate to receive a generous donation of freshly picked apples, just in time for Thanksgiving baking!



Community Living Oakville is dedicated to enhancing the lives of people with developmental disabilities. We're on the lookout for talented individuals who are passionate about making a difference and joining our incredible team!



Visit our website at <https://oakcl.org/careers> to explore available positions and learn more about our organization.

# Community Living Oakville



Dream • Inspire • Belong

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