



Community Living
Oakville



Dream • Inspire • Belong

CELEBRATING
70
YEARS OF INCLUSION

HAPPENINGS

70 YEARS
OF COMMUNITY LIVING OAKVILLE

1954 - 2024



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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the latest edition of Happenings!

The start of "2024" has been very eventful and exciting around Community Living Oakville.

Did you know that this is our 70th year? As we celebrate our anniversary, we reflect on the history of Community Living Oakville, the people in which we have supported over the years, the staff and leaders who have shaped this organization and the families, members and our greater community who have significantly contributed to the success of the agency.

In 1954, Community Living Oakville was founded by the Kelley and Gunn families who independently hired a teacher and a tiny school grew to seven children and found a home at St. Jude's Church. From the vision of two parents to community-wide services, the changes have been monumental and are to be celebrated.



We invite you to learn more about the history of Community Living Oakville through this special issue and celebrate with us!

In addition to celebrating our past, we are also embracing change and growth in the present. I'm excited to announce that our administrative office has relocated to a new address at 1333 Dorval Dr. Unit 300 in Oakville. This move signifies a fresh start and provides an optimal space for our administrative and leadership teams to collaborate, innovate, and shape the future of our organization. Our commitment to fostering creativity, inclusivity, and community partnerships remains at the forefront as we continue to provide services and programs that promote inclusion and enrich the lives of those we support.

As this fiscal year comes to an end, so does our current strategic plan. We are proud to highlight that we have accomplished great success over the course of this four-year plan. Some key highlights include completing Personal Outcome Measure interviews with people supported; realizing personal goals and promoting rights education. We have adapted services in order to address changing needs of people, including those that are seniors; facilitating senior's activities and partnering with town led initiatives. Community Participation models adapted based on people's preferences, along with shifting services during the pandemic towards online service options and strengthening our partnership with Sheridan College and the Town of Oakville.

In addition, Community Living Oakville strengthened our focus on quality supports and services through re-accreditation via the Council on Quality and Leadership, data tracking via appreciative inquiry tools, completing quality assurance check across departments and strengthening positive behaviour supports. Moreover; we developed an internal diversity committee, a multi-faceted volunteer program, a family group and enhanced our focus on development and marketing.



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE (CONTINUED)

Our employment team Xplore Employment re-branded, expanded workshop offerings, as well as opportunities to strengthen people's employability skills through pre-employment programs in partnership with high schools across our region. Further opportunities were developed through Project Search and our partnership with the school board and Halton Healthcare. Many employer partnerships were developed and people we support secured competitive employment.

We further expanded our use of social media; establishing a strong media presence via social media channels. In turn, this has resulted in greater reach, advocacy, information sharing and enhanced communication. This list is not exhaustive and I am extremely proud of our staff and leadership teams who have made these outcomes possible through their hard work and dedication towards our mission.

Looking ahead, we are gearing up for the next chapter with the development of our new strategic plan for 2024-2027. Your valuable input and feedback during our strategic planning focus groups have been instrumental, and I encourage you to stay tuned for updates as we continue to advocate for full community inclusion and opportunities for those we support.

As you may be aware, Community Living agencies across the province, thanks to the initiatives of Community Living Ontario are promoting the #5tosurvive campaign. This initiative calls on the Ontario government to provide an immediate 5% increase to our base funding. For over three decades, agencies such as ours have received less than a 4% increase, while the costs of living has risen dramatically and overall inflation has challenged all of us. As a result, our services across the sector are at risk; posing difficult decisions in relation to our service offerings. We are committed to our advocacy efforts in order to ensure quality supports and services for all people supported. We are calling on all staff, families, members and community partners to make your voices heard by contacting your MPP directly, or joining the campaign via Community Living Ontario; who will directly send a letter to your local MPP on your behalf via their website: <https://communitylivingontario.ca/what-we-do/advocacy-education-awareness/five-to-survive-campaign/>. You may also read a most recent interview via Inside Halton, who recently interviewed the Halton Community Living Executive Directors.

Lastly, I would like to announce that this will be the final issue of our Happenings newsletter. We've heard your feedback regarding the importance of timely and informative communication, and we are committed to exploring new avenues to keep you updated on all the latest developments at Community Living Oakville. In the meantime, please follow us on social media for regular updates and announcements.

Warm Regards,



Alexandra Hoeck-Murray
Executive Director

OUR FOUNDING STORY

Celebrating 70 Years of Inclusion



Jocelyn Gunn



Margaret Kelley

In 1954, Jocelyn Gunn alongside her late husband Geoffrey and the Kelley couple, Roy and Margaret, set the stage for a journey in support of children with developmental disabilities. As we celebrate 70 years of inclusion, let's delve deeper into how Community Living Oakville became a beacon of inclusivity.

A Shared Dream of Inclusion

The Gunn and Kelley families hired teacher Amy James to provide education for their children, Pamela-Lyn Gunn and David Bruce Kelley. Recognizing the need for a dedicated space, they initiated the formation of CLO during an organizational meeting at the Kelley home. Initially known as the Oakville and District Association for the Mentally Retarded, the name evolved over time to reflect a commitment to inclusivity.



OUR FOUNDING STORY



Bruce-Lyn School: A Hub of Inclusive Education

In September 1955, the Association was incorporated, and the Bruce-Lyn School was unveiled. This institution, named after the middle names of the founding couples' children, became a cornerstone of inclusive education. The school's philosophy centered on recognizing the unique potential of each child, fostering an environment where they could thrive, learn, and grow together.

Transition to Mainstream Classrooms

Jocelyn Gunn's advocacy extended beyond the establishment of Bruce-Lyn School. In the mid-1980s, CLO took a significant step by integrating children with developmental disabilities into mainstream classrooms. This bold move aimed to break down societal barriers, promoting understanding and acceptance within the broader community.



OUR FOUNDING STORY

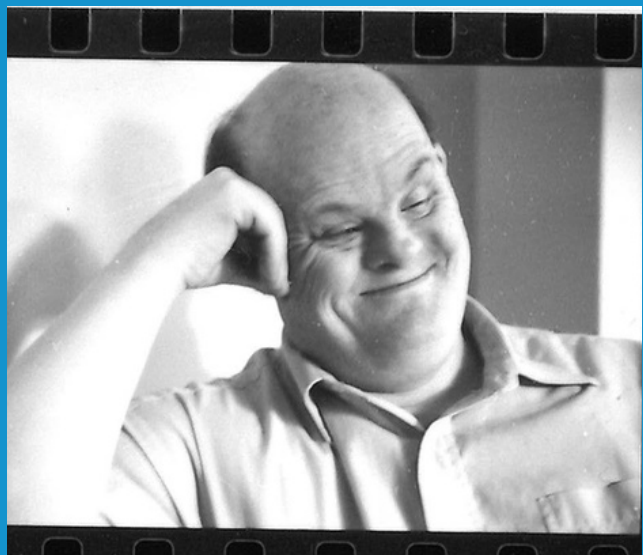


The Legacy of Inclusive Volunteerism

Jocelyn's passing, at the age of 83, marked the end of an era, but her legacy lives on through the Bruce-Lyn Award for Excellence in Volunteerism. This annual accolade stands as a testament to her commitment to fostering a sense of belonging and inclusivity within CLO. Volunteers continue to play a pivotal role in ensuring that people with developmental disabilities are embraced and empowered in all aspects of community life.

The Story of David Kelley

David initially enrolled in the Bruce-Lyn School and touched the lives of many with his warmth and resilience. His life story stands as a compelling showcase of the transformative impact of inclusive programs. David found a home in one of CLO's 11 group residences and actively participated in a day program. "He called us every day, telling us about his adventures and aspirations," said Roy Kelley.



Melissa
Reid



Then



Now

Thien
Ferrie



Then



Now

Mark
Rivers



Then



Now

Kelly
Perras



Then



Now

EVOLUTION OF SERVICES: A JOURNEY OF INCLUSIVITY

Over the past seven decades, the landscape of traditional day programs for people with developmental disabilities has undergone significant transformation, reflecting a shift towards inclusivity, choice, and community integration. Community Living Oakville (CLO) has been at the forefront of this evolution, paving the way for a more inclusive world where people who have a developmental disability are empowered to lead fulfilling, meaningful, active lives.

This journey began in the 1950s, after sending people to Burlington for training. Here, the establishment of the Oakville Adult Training Centre was created, which offered structured activities and vocational training for adults with developmental disabilities. This marked the early recognition of the importance of providing meaningful day programs tailored to the unique needs and abilities of people.

In the following decades, programs like Claycrafters and Children's Services emerged, providing people with opportunities to explore artistic talents and engage in recreational activities, fostering creativity and social interaction.

As societal attitudes towards disability evolved, so too, did the approach to day programs. The emphasis shifted towards empowering people to develop essential life skills through services like 'LifeSkills' and 'Prevocational' training; although segregated the thought was to prepare people for greater independence and participation in the workforce.

Speers Place Industries (SPI) was then developed and operated as a sheltered workshop, providing vocational training and employment within a segregated environment for people with developmental disabilities. However, it became evident that this model fell short of meeting the diverse needs and aspirations of participants. While it offered valuable skills, it also limited people's autonomy and community integration. Recognizing that people deserved more than segregated employment settings, Community Living Oakville took the lead and embarked on a journey towards a more inclusive approach, shifting away from sheltered workshops towards programs that emphasized community engagement, empowerment, and meaningful participation in the workforce. Through CLO's Xplore Employment, people have the option to access employment opportunities in the community. Providing support to people to achieve competitive employment and receive a fair and equal wage.

Community Living Oakville, also recognized the need to expand services to reach struggling families seeking daytime opportunities who had no access to services. Thus, the Fee for Service programs were established, with the aim of providing greater outreach and support to families who's loved ones were graduating high school & facing barriers in accessing traditional funded programs. The foundation for Fee for Service programs was laid with the introduction of Passport and later STEPP program, which served as pivotal initiatives in expanding CLO's reach and addressing the growing demand for day programs.



These services were instrumental in bridging the gap for families who found themselves on long waitlists for funded programs, breaking these funding barriers and ensuring that people with developmental disabilities could access meaningful daytime activities- thus providing families respite, and ability maintain their family dynamic.

This customization of day services fostered a sense of ownership and autonomy, empowering people to choose services that brought value and meaning to their lives. Community Connect and Community Connect - Hub represent the latest chapter in this journey towards inclusivity. These services were originally the traditional Life skills Programs, Pre-vocational Programs and Speers Place Industries where on a daily basis around 150 people would attend centrally located buildings and attend programs.



Throughout this evolution, services offered by Community Living Oakville are a testament to the organization's dedication to person-centred approaches and community integration, and most importantly our willingness to change and adapt services. Services are tailored to each person's unique aspirations, allowing people to explore their talents, engage in meaningful activities, and build connections within their communities.



Dream, Inspire, Belong - these words encapsulate the vision of Community Living Oakville- from 1954 to present day 2024. Everyone is encouraged to dream big, inspire others, and find a sense of belonging in their community. Through its ongoing initiatives, CLO remains steadfast in its mission to promote inclusivity and empower people with developmental disabilities to thrive and contribute meaningfully to society.



As we reflect on the progress made over the last 70 years, it is evident that the evolution of day programs for people with developmental disabilities has been guided by a commitment to recognizing and honouring the inherent dignity and worth of people.

Andrea
Wille



Then



Now

**Vanessa
Rowley**



Then



Now

Employee Spotlight



Shannon Coles

Director of Human Resources | 45 years

Approaching 45 years as a Community Living Oakville employee, Shannon has been witness to the growth and transformation of the organization. Shannon started as a student at Ellis House in 1977, becoming a fulltime Residential Counsellor at Ellis House in 1979. Since then, Shannon has worked in the Supported Independent Living (SIL) program, Day Services, worked as a Staff and Services Coordinator, became a Residential Manager, and then a Resource Manager. In 2008-2009 she went back to school for Human Resources, becoming CLO's HR Manager and now the HR Director. While at CLO, Shannon got married, had 3 sons and 6 beautiful grandchildren.

Shannon, your 45-year milestone is a rare and extraordinary achievement. Your long-standing commitment to Community Living Oakville has played a pivotal role in our organization's success and growth. You have been a source of inspiration for your colleagues, a mentor for many, and a pillar of strength during both challenging and triumphant times.

Jody Blaauw

Supported Living Manager | 29 years

Jody played a pivotal role in the evolution of Community Living Oakville. By working with other agencies and Community Living Ontario on Communications Strategy at a fundamental time, the collaborative work ensured our involvement in transformation of the sector. His efforts introduced the first Vision and Values statement, assisted Self Advocates to organize and created the first website. Many of these were firsts for the Organization as well as the sector. The fundraising grant initiated a formal fundraising program and strengthened community partnerships. His tireless advocacy for people we support created a positive and lasting impact on our community. Jody's passion and contributions were integral to our growth and recognition as vital to the Oakville Community.

Jody, Your dedication and passion for inclusion transformed lives of people we support, and has been instrumental in shaping what CLO has become today!



Toby Goldenberg

Community Participation Supports | 35 years

Toby has been a dedicated staff for over three decades. Throughout her career at Community Living Oakville, she has worked hard to ensure that every person she supports lives their best life. In her current role as a member of the Community Participation Supports team, Toby explores and builds partnerships to provide opportunities for people to fulfill their dreams and goals. Her passion, thoughtfulness and dedication are just a few attributes that make her a positive impact in everyone's life.



Employee Spotlight



Elena Finnegan

Supported Independent Living | 28 years

Elena's 28-year tenure at Community Living Oakville is a testament to her unwavering commitment to empowering people in Supported Independent Living. Over the years, she played a pivotal role in enhancing the lives of those she supported, fostering independence, and enabling them to lead fulfilling lives. In addition to her primary role, Elena has been a steadfast union representative and steward, embodying the agency's commitment to individualized supports and advocacy. Join us in recognizing Elena's enduring contribution to our community, where her dedication has empowered people in independent living and strengthened our collective support system.

Tracey Morrow

Employment Services | 33 years

Tracey Morrow has celebrated over 30 years with Community Living Oakville, working in a number of service areas including supported living, community participation supports and employment. Tracey currently works with Xplore Employment, where she assists the people she supports to find meaningful paid jobs in their community. She is a beacon of positivity, transforming challenges into triumphs with a smile. Her vibrant spirit and dedication have helped shape the culture of the organization and make positive change in the lives of the people she supports.



Nicole Messenger-Lehmann

Supported Living | 30 years

We are proud to highlight Nicole Messenger-Lehmann. With an impressive 30 years of dedicated service to others, Nicole exemplifies person-centered support, consistently prioritizing the needs of people she supports. Her steadfast commitment and compassionate approach enrich the lives of all those she encounters. Thank you, Nicole, for your profound impact and invaluable contributions. Here's to many more years of excellence!

Owen
Ramcharan



Then



Now

Bryan
Lancaster



Then



Now

Ronald
Copland



Then



Now

Kaitlin
Nesbitt



Then



Now

MEMORABLE MILESTONES

The history of our agency



Miss James & Pam

1954

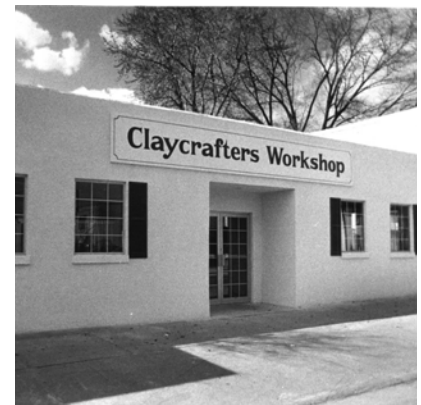
The Kelley's and the Gunn's hired Miss Amy James as a teacher for their children. The school was held alternating weeks in the family rooms of the Kelley and Gunn homes on weekday mornings.



MISS SCHOUTEN
TEACHER Philip Bill
Dent
ST. JUDES, 1955

1955

The school moved to the basement of St. Jude's Church with seven children and a second teacher, Miss Maaïke Schoutens, was hired.



1975

In 1975, the clay and craft component became independent of the Adult Training Centre and Claycrafters Workshop was formed.

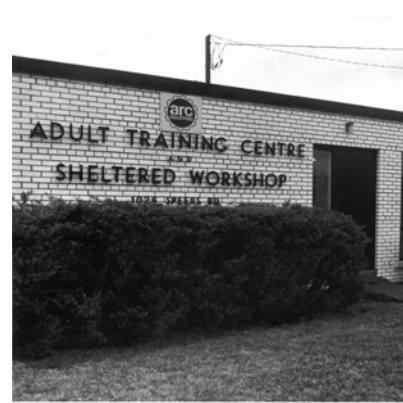
1955

Official opening of the Bruce-Lyn School on September 22, 1955 had 15 children in attendance on a daily basis.



1965

After sending adults to a training centre in Burlington for about a year, the Oakville Adult Training Centre opened in March 1965 for people 16 years and older.





1983

In 1983, the Town of Oakville adopted one of the Claycrafters Trog characters as its official mascot.



2002

In October 2002, CLO sold its location at 1108 Speers Road and moved into the main office location at 301 Wycroft Road.

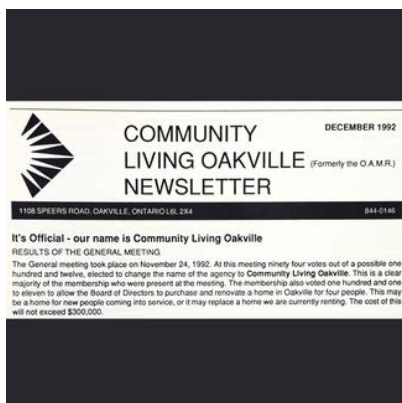


2024

Community Living Oakville established its new administrative offices at the Glen Abbey Golf Course.

1992

At a special membership meeting in November 1992, the official decision was made to rename the organization: Community Living Oakville.



2023

On January 1, 2023, the day service location at 147 Church Street was officially closed after over 45 years.



Robert
Hall



Then



Now

Kelly
Pitcher



Then



Now

Ann Marie
Moore



Then



Now

Jason
Brennan



Then



Now

Cody
Prevett

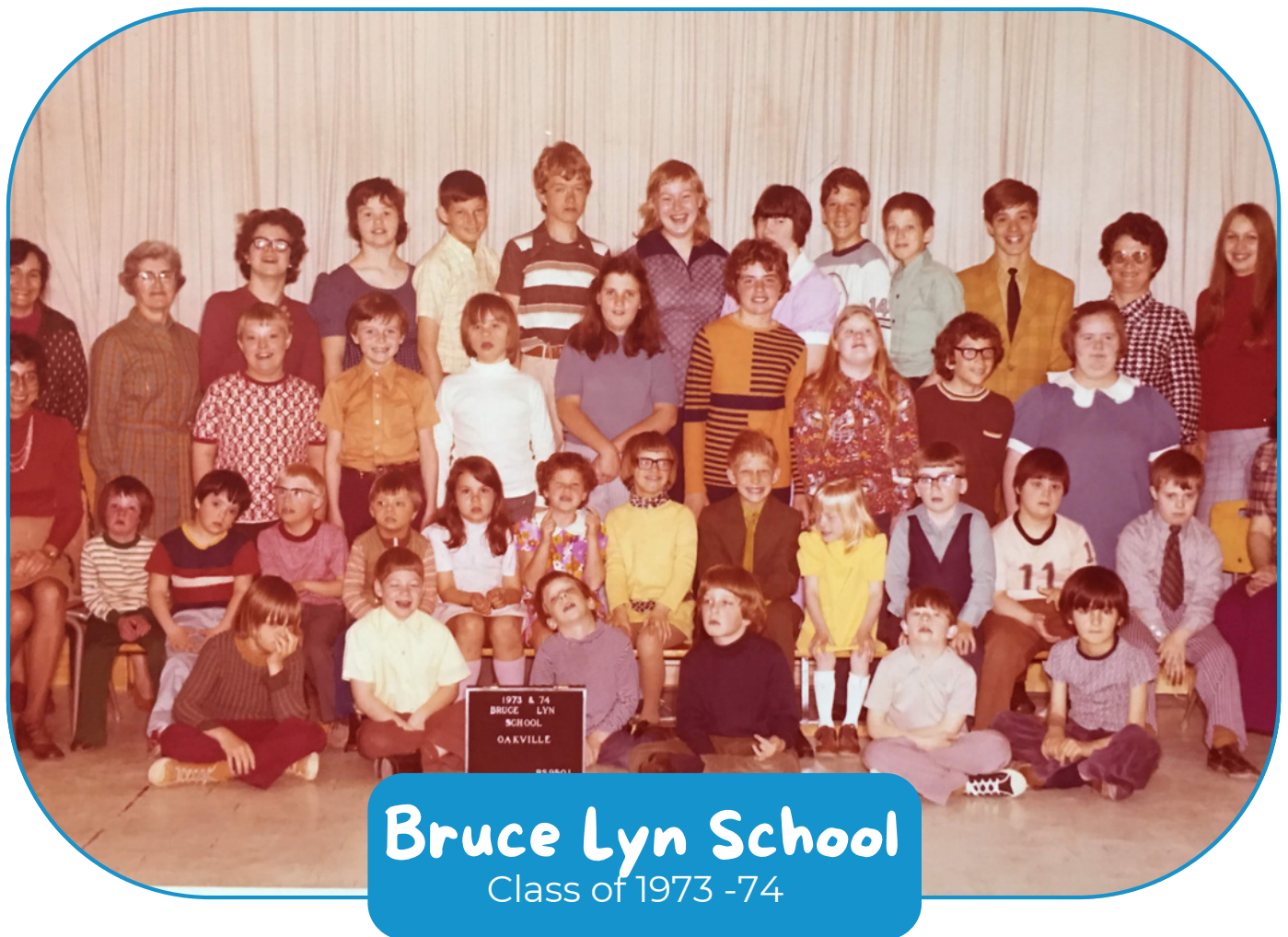


Then



Now

WHO DO YOU KNOW?



Flashback to the good ol' days with this gem from the Bruce Lyn School class of '73-'74!

Can you spot familiar faces or maybe even yourself?

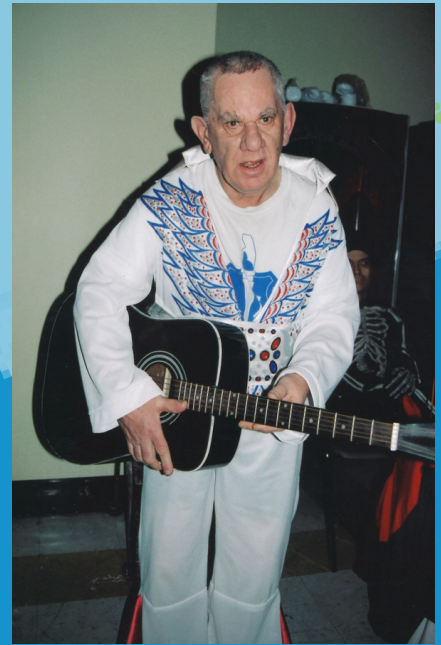
Hint: Larry W, Larry K, Ursula S, Hans S, Linda G, Andrea W, Cindy G, Alison S, Brenda S, Warren W, Debbie M, Michael L

DIGGING IN THE CRATES

We went diving into old boxes
and albums and found these
gems!











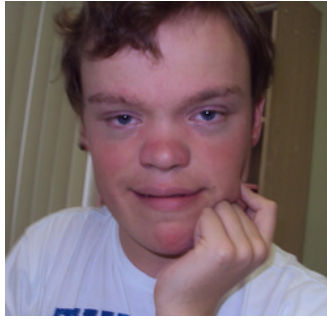






"Inclusion is about celebrating the unique beauty in every smile."

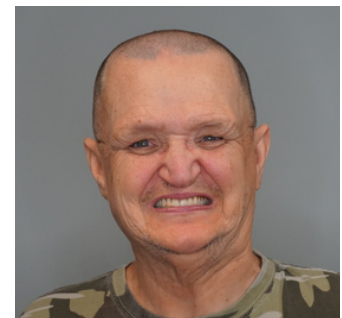
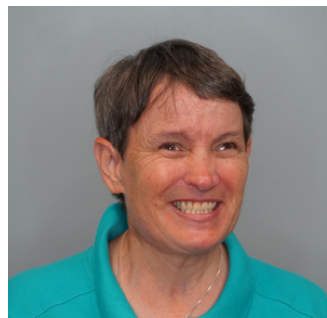




“

Let the smiles of our beautiful community members remind us of the power of kindness, understanding, and unconditional acceptance.

”

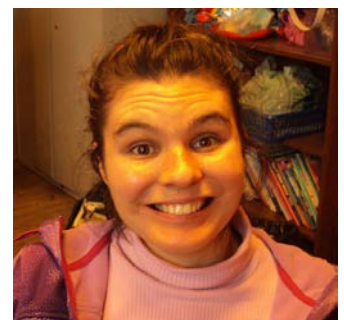
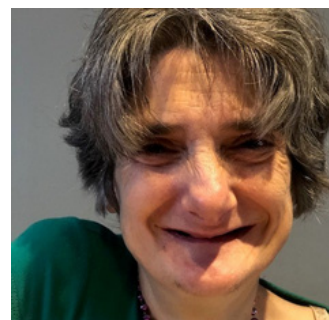
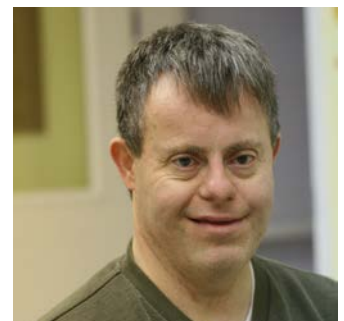
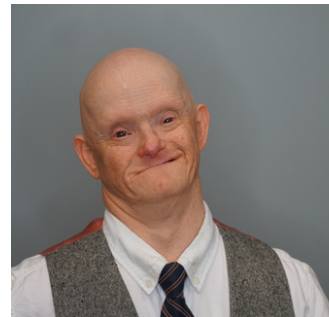
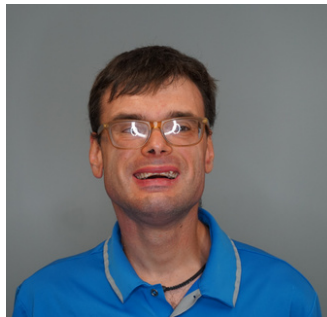




“

These beautiful expressions transcend language, culture, and creed, reminding us of our shared humanity and the beauty of embracing diversity.

”

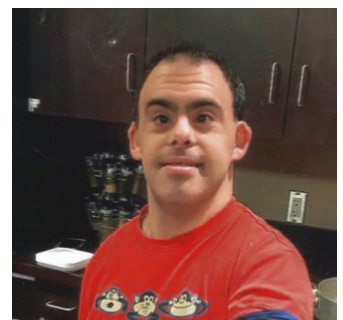
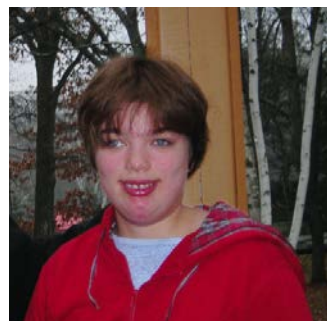




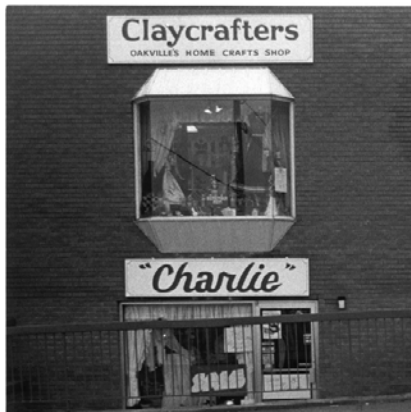
“

These smiles are not just reflections of joy; they're reflections of our collective journey towards a world where everyone is seen, heard, and valued.

”



CLAYCRAFTERS AND THE TROGS OF SIXTEEN MILE CREEK



"I have fond memories of the fabulous work done by the talented people making the Trog Family of Sixteen Mile Creek made at Claycrafters on Randall Street. I was a teenager living in Oakville, we had a family retail business and sold many Trogs to tourists coming to Tobermory, Ontario. I loved the Trogs and talking about the wonderful people at Claycrafters who handcrafted each unique one!"
- Margaret Connor

In the heart of downtown Oakville, a story of creativity and community spirit unfolded that still warms the hearts of those who remember. It began in 1975 when a division of the Adult Training Centre branched out to form Claycrafters, a beacon of artistic expression and inclusivity.

With its prime location, Claycrafters wasn't just a store; it was a destination where imagination took physical form. In 1978, the organization expanded, acquiring 147 Church Street, which not only served as a day program for Community Living Oakville (CLO) but also became the birthplace of the Trog Family of Sixteen Mile Creek—a creation of Manager Maureen Taylor and her daughter.

These weren't ordinary figurines. Each Trog was a masterpiece, lovingly handcrafted by people supported by CLO, embodying a piece of their creators' spirit. The Trogs quickly captured the town's affection, and in 1983, one of these charming characters was embraced as Oakville's official mascot.

But the Trogs were more than just mascots or models; they were a testament to the skill, dedication, and creativity of the artisans from Community Living Oakville. Their craftsmanship enriched Oakville's cultural fabric and highlighted the remarkable abilities of those within the CLO.

As we look back on the legacy of Claycrafters, which closed its doors in 1992, we don't just see a store or a series of children's books. We see the enduring spirit of creativity and collaboration that thrived in Oakville. The Trogs may be a memory, but the values they represented live on.

Let us celebrate the hands that shaped the Trogs and the community that cherished them. Their legacy is a reminder of the power of inclusion and the importance of nurturing imagination in our communities. Here's to the Trogs of Sixteen Mile Creek, to Claycrafters, and to the unbeatable spirit of Oakville that continues to inspire us all.





Looking Ahead

We are thrilled to that Community Living Oakville has secured a new office location! This move is a significant milestone for our organization and we are excited about the opportunities this new space presents for our administrative, management, and senior management teams to continue their dedicated work.

Our new office will be located at 1333 Dorval Drive, Suite 300, Oakville, ON L6M 4G2 and is situated on the Glen Abbey golf course.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all of you for your continued support and partnership. The success of Community Living Oakville is a result of the collective efforts of our dedicated families, members, and staff.

Thank you for being a valued part of Community Living Oakville!

GRATITUDE

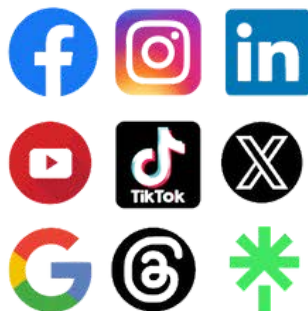


As we celebrate 70 years of support and inclusion for people with developmental disabilities, Community Living Oakville is overflowing with gratitude. We are immensely thankful for every moment of support, every shared smile, and every milestone achieved together over the years.

To express our gratitude, we invite you to join us in sharing your cherished memories and moments of inclusion using **#dreaminspirebelong**. Let's fill the digital space with stories of joy, growth, and belonging as we reflect on the journey so far and look forward to many more years of making dreams come true, inspiring others, and fostering a sense of belonging for all. Together, let's continue to build a world where everyone is valued and celebrated.

Our Social Media Platforms

Stay updated on our events, resources, and advocacy efforts by following us on our social media platforms here:



<https://linktr.ee/CommunityLivingOakville>



Dream • Inspire • Belong

CELEBRATING
70
YEARS OF INCLUSION

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