

# Community Living Connections

## How Well Do We Listen?

Debbi Black—Manager, Residential Services  
***“If it wasn’t hard, everyone would do it. It’s the hard that makes it great.”***

This is a line from one of my favourite movies. Tom Hanks spoke the words during a coaching session in “A League of Their Own”. He also said, “there is no crying in baseball”, but try as I might I can’t work that into this article. I do know how hard it is to learn to be an active listener, but as Tom says, “it’s the hard that makes it great”.

One of the most important skills that we, as community support workers, need to acquire is the ability to listen actively and attentively. We need to listen to the people we support and to each other.

Real listening occurs when you respond to the person you are talking within a way that indicates that you care about what he or she is saying. The idea is to let that other person know that you are focusing your attention on the words and feelings that are important to the speaker.

Learning to listen, really listen, has the ability to change how people react to you.

- You will learn a lot more about the people around you.
- You will learn things about a person that others may miss.
- You will appear thoughtful and intelligent; it is impossible to showcase your worst traits when your mouth is closed (Something all of us learn the hard way).
- You will be practicing self control and self discipline; always very good things.
- You will significantly improve all of the important relationships in your life (family, friends, co-

workers, etc).

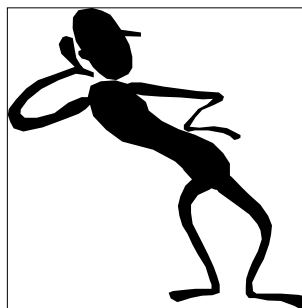
- You will be much more confident and have more control of yourself, especially in conflict situations.
- You will develop greater self esteem.

So.....how do we learn to listen? These techniques, while very simple, are excellent strategies.

- Close your mouth. Listening and talking are mutually exclusive.
- Don’t try to predict or judge the outcome, or argue with the speaker mentally. In other words, get out of your head and into theirs. Sandra Harrison calls this “rehearsing your comeback”.
- Watch your body language. How is your eye contact?
- Ask questions when you need to have something clarified.
- Walk a mile in someone else’s shoes.
- Control your emotions, or better yet, leave them behind. Your own fears and worries prevent you from really listening.
- React to ideas, not to the person specifically. This is especially helpful when you don’t particularly like the person you are listening to. Remember, you don’t have to like someone to learn from them.

Sandra teaches in CPI that our brains can process 400 words per minute but we can only speak 150 words per minute, confirming that real listening takes effort.

It takes a lot of concentration and determination to be a good listener. Old habits are hard to break, but keep in mind that “a closed mouth gathers no foot”.



It is Community Living’s belief that *“all persons live in a state of dignity, share in all elements of living in the community, and have the opportunity to participate effectively.”*

### This Issue ...

- \* “Where do you Draw Your Strength”;
- \* “Hard Work Pays Off”;
- \* “Volunteer Profiles”;
- \* “Maley St. Addition”;

See inside for more!

## Where do You Draw Your Strength

*Kathy Botham—Residential Supervisor*

Well 2009 is underway! How are your resolutions going? What plans, changes or goals did you make for yourself? Did you make any?

I have made a couple. #1 - I will drink more water. THAT lasted a day and a half and hydration occurs once again with coffee and diet pop. #2 - I will drink less diet pop. Well that ship has sailed as previously mentioned. #3 - Getting my newsletter in on time. Sandra M. has graciously given me another extension as I sit here writing. (Thank you Sandra).

It is times such as this when resolutions give you the opportunity of bettering yourself and reaching goals. I am quoting a friend of mine who is a writer and she wrote recently about her resolutions. "Many people who have had near death experiences use it as an opportunity to change their outlook on life. I choose this year to change my outlook without the near death."

I have had, not a goal really however more of a thought, maybe a wish that I could do a certain something. This is something that I see people do quite often. Some have for many years. I work with people here at Community Living North Greenville that do it regularly. And when they come in the next day after doing it the night before, I am so very proud of them. I wish I could be strong enough to do what they did so easily. I am willing to bet there are more here that do it that I am unaware of.

It is something that I have never really voiced out loud that I wish I could do. In fact if you know me well enough you would think it was unrealistic. I do hope I have told people that

do it how much I look up to them and what such a selfless act does to help so many people.

Have I got your curiosity? We have amongst us "blood donors". I know that Sandra Harrison, Sandra McNamara and Nancy Fischer are three people here at CLNG that give the "gift of life" regularly. They help heal people and save lives by taking an hour of their time every few months to donate their blood. I know there are many more of you here for sure.

A friend of mine recently told me that his mother who had leukemia lived longer because of the blood transfusions she was given. Cancer took her life but he had his mother longer because of the strength she got from the blood she received.

Well do you see where I am going with this? #4 - I will donate blood this year. Along with my friend who is as apprehensive about needles as I am (borderline fear) we are going to donate blood this year. We are doing so remembering his mom and what we can do for somebody else's mom, dad or child.

I am going as well remembering what some of my coworkers do. Perhaps I am writing this so now I know I need to follow through. Either way I will go drawing strength from some people I work with like Sandra M., Nancy and Sandra H. I will come in to work the next day and proudly tell them what I did the night before. If anybody else would be interested in donating blood I suggest you don't call me, call Nancy, Sandra M. or Sandra H. Details to follow....

CLNG would like to extend their appreciation to Venessa Labonte In case you didn't notice, this picture she painted was featured on our Christmas card this year.

Thanks, Venessa!



## Under the Weather

*Brenda Dillabough—Manager, Day Supports*

Although our community is under a blanket of snow I am not referring to the weather at this time. By now most people are aware of Lisa Sigl being off on Short Term Disability. She is experiencing some medical issues that are keeping her out of our work force at this time. We wish her a speedy and healthy return and expect to have her back within the next two months.

In the interim you will be pleased to know that Lisa's support schedule will resume any day. A temporary posting has been available, with sufficient interest internally to find relief.

We thank you for your patience and cooperation during the time when day services were interrupted. We look forward to providing continued individual day supports in 2009.

## From the E.D.'s Desk

*Ted Shuh—Executive Director*

In the last newsletter I spoke about the final closure of Rideau Regional Centre and the remaining government operated institutions in the province as well as the transformation of the developmental services (Bill 77). It is important when speaking to the facility closure issue that we also speak about the many benefits and opportunities the financial resources that came through the facility closures initiative's dating back to the early 80's, provided Community Living North Grenville and those individuals who have always lived in this community.

Community Living North Grenville is currently funded for 28 Residential Group Living "spaces". Those homes are staffed 24 hours a day. Most of those spaces were developed through funds received through the facility closure initiative. Today, of those 28 spaces, 16 are occupied by individuals who have always lived in our community. As families aged and found it difficult to care for their son or daughter at home, these homes have provided a very valuable alternative to those families. Those funds have also provided us with the opportunity to develop and re-develop other supports such as day services, and supported independent living which fur-

ther benefits individuals in our community.

The funds received through the facility closure initiative remain in our community even after the individuals to whom they were originally intended no longer need them. They will assist Community Living North Grenville in meeting current and future needs of those individuals. In total Community Living North Grenville supports 110 people in our community.

As we move forward into the future, accountability to people and finances will become increasingly important. One way to address those issues is through a process of accreditation. This model is used extensively in Health and Education. We anticipate at some time in the future governments will only fund organizations such as ours that have received some form of accreditation certification. We believe this is a healthy process. Although the initial process can be time consuming for staff, the outcomes that come with accreditation can be very rewarding to organizations. With that in mind we have established a small accreditation committee to review different models that would be appropriate for us to use. This committee will bring forward a recommendation for consideration by our board of directors within the next few months.



**Trevor Phillip Harris,**

"He showed an interest in photography early on and was invited to join a local photography club. He learns about the basics of camera use, different types of cameras, different subject matter and they all go out around the area in all four seasons and try to capture interesting pictures. For Trevor, his photo-

graphs express what has meaning in his life and they are a visual reminder of some of his best memories."

Trevor's picture was displayed at the Canadian Association for Community Living's Art Exhibition 2008. Good Work, Trevor!

## Wii Have It!

*Brenda Dillabough—Manager, Day Supports*  
Christmas came early at the Resource Centre this year. Jessie B. and her family generously provided us with a Sports Wii in early December.

The Adult Day Supports are now able to offer a number of interactive sports that include Bowling, Boxing, Baseball, Tennis and Golf. The Resource is available for use in evenings and weekends in addition to the week days for anyone interested in practicing their skills

or trying a new sport.

We now have a complete interactive package. Experiential Learning is great fun for individuals that may have limited mobility or flexibility. The Wii offers a challenge to individuals to test their competitive nature.

Both systems offer good entertainment for the spectators waiting for their turn or for those that are satisfied as an armchair quarterback!

## A New Addition to Maley St.

The Maley St. household has welcomed in two new little additions during the Christmas season.

Robert Merkley agreed that he had had a pretty good year but when asked if there was something missing in his life that he wished he had, he placed his hand about a foot and a half off the floor and was asked, "A dog, Bob?". He smiled and nodded.



The conversation that followed consisted of the usual reasons why a dog was not a suitable choice as there were many people to consider. So he looked at his options. After agreeing that a bird might work out, he went to

the pet store in Barrhaven to see what kind of bird he would like. Canaries were nice because they sang so sweetly but he really liked watching the finches flutter around together.

It was clear that we needed to find a breed of finch known for its singing ability. After a bit of research we found that Strawberry finches were the only finches with a true song. So

Bob went to the library and did some researching on his own to see what he needed to know to care for his new birds.

On December 16<sup>th</sup> his birds arrived and he was excited to show them off. A male and a female strawberry finch all the way from a bird aviary northwest of Waterloo came to live in Bob's bedroom that day.

Names for the birds came streaming in from everyone who saw them but Bob was anxious to have the kids from church help out as well. He brought a paper to church requesting suggestions and sure enough it came home filled up with all sorts of interesting names. One by one Bob nodded or shook his head to each one over and over again; until finally the only two names left were Bradley and Kandi. Bob wrote a note back to thank them and in turn they asked for him to bring in pictures of his birds for them to see what they had helped him name.

Except for a bit of seed on the floor the little birds are pretty sweet. Thanks to Bob they eat three square meals a day. When Bob is eating they seem to think this is a good time to eat too.

Their chirping is nice, not annoying, but we will have to wait a few months to see if they will sing.

## Alfred Hansen

Alfred passed away quietly in his sleep on December 31, 2008 at Bayfield Manor. He was entering his 49<sup>th</sup> year. Alfred had lived at home in a rural environment until two years ago when some significant medical issues required him to be hospitalized. Alfred was never able to physically recuperate and was transferred to Bayfield Manor from the Kemptville District Hospital.



Alfred was involved with Community Living North Grenville his entire adult life. He will be remembered for his incredible ability to solve a wide array of puzzles. Alfred especially liked doing jigsaw puzzles

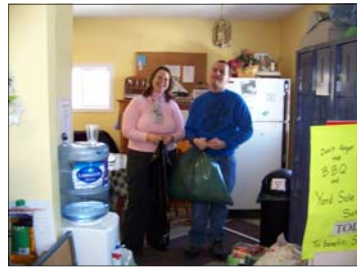
and would sometimes take one home to complete over a weekend. Alfred knew his way around tools and enjoyed the time using them. When a lawn chair needed re-webbing Alfred would be quick to jump up to lend a hand.

He also had an incredible ability to use an alternate form of communication and could move from PCS to sign language without hesitation.

We were able to keep in touch with Alfred when he moved to Bayfield. People will miss the subtle wave of acknowledgement he gave as he sat patiently waiting for his next visitor.

## Volunteer Profiles

*Marcus Dickie—Community Options Supervisor*  
 “The thinker” - Appropriately summing up Jason’s commitment and dedication to his website design, Jason works ardently completing his web design courses and devoting his time to redesigning the Girls Incorporated of Upper Canada website and maintaining the Salvation Army’s website.



Jamie at the Salvation Army joins team of caring and dedicated volunteers that help keep this invaluable organization operating. Jamie is responsible for the cleaning and general care of the facility. His contribution is greatly appreciated by the Salvation Army Staff.

Amanda’s love of animals is the key ingredient to her success at Big Sky Ranch. She assists in the very important role of caring for animals which have been abandoned and often mistreated. Although limited by the winter weather Amanda has found a way to continue to be an advocate for those who do not have a voice by creating an animal rescue database that tells an animal’s story and information on how people can help.



## Albin’s hard work pays off!

*Shelley Gerber—Employment Supervisor*  
 Albin has good reason to be proud. At his company’s 2008 Christmas party, Albin was presented with a very special item: his 10 year pin.



He works Monday to Friday day shift at Jonsson’s Independent Grocers as a bagger. Often he is the only one to assist the cashiers with packing and to make sure that a good supply of carts is always available in the lobby. The owners of the store and his fellow co-workers know that Albin is a man they can rely on.

When Albin isn’t at the grocery store he may be at one of his seasonal jobs, snow shoveling or mowing lawns. Albin regularly gets stopped on the street by someone looking for a strong, willing worker to

help with something. Albin has helped people move, cleaned out garages, and hauled away brush.

But it’s not all about work. Albin and his steady girlfriend Linda were married in 2001. They settled in a lovely second floor apartment and enjoy an active social life. Albin is an expert bowler, regularly getting high score, and often competing and winning tournaments. Albin and Linda enjoy taking vacations, usually traveling somewhere in Eastern Ontario. Plans are taking shape for 2010 when they will make a trip to Florida and visit Walt Disney World.

Albin is proud of having a good job and knows he has a good reputation. If you stop at the store, chances are Albin will say hello but he won’t stop to visit. He’s got responsibilities.

## Retirement comes sooner than you think!

*Marian McCaffrey, Group Retirement Services*  
After age 45, time just speeds up, grey hairs accelerate and retirement day arrives quickly.

In your Group RRSP

- Investment decisions are made by you.
- Part-time employees are eligible to join the plan.
- Bi-weekly contributions come off your pay, so you never have to worry about affording a lump sum of money during RRSP season.
- Contributions are flexible, you can increase or decrease your deposits according to affordability.
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- A separate RRSP plan for your spouse is available.
- You can monitor your Group RRSP online at [www.grsaccess.com](http://www.grsaccess.com)
- I can provide you with personalized guidance. I can look at your RRSP online to give you an update upon request.
- If you are not sure if the new Tax-Free Savings Account suits your personal financial plan I can help you with information on this.

Marian McCaffrey  
Group Retirement Services  
(613) 748 3455 Ext. 238

Community Living Ontario Marks the Closure of Institutions:

**Tuesday March 31st;** A "Reflection on Lives Lived";  
**Thurs April 2nd;** a hosted celebration at Queen's Park recognizing the roles of the three political parties;  
**Friday April 3rd;** involves local Community Living Organizations honouring their local MPP.

## Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP)

In a recent news release Community Living Ontario welcomed the Ontario Government's decision to allow investments in the Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP) without it affecting people's disability income.

The RDSP was announced in the 2007 federal budget and is similar to a Registered Education Savings Plan. The RDSP allows people who have a disability, their families, and friends to invest in a savings plan over time to save for their future.

The eligible beneficiary (only one can be named, and a beneficiary can have only one RDSP) must:

- Be a Canadian resident;
- Have a valid SIN number;
- Be eligible for the disability amount. Form T2201, "Disability Tax Credit Certificate".
- Be no more than 59 years of age by December 31 of the year in which a contribution is made.

Additionally, Federal Government Grants & Bonds are contributed to the RDSP.

For more information talk to a financial advisor, or visit CRA's website at [www.cra.gc.ca](http://www.cra.gc.ca).

## Staff Update

- Since our last newsletter CLNG has welcomed new staff members; Tracey Crawford, Connor Nicholls; Amy Sinclair, Tim Minshull; and Sherry Stewart.
- Melanie Williams, after maternity leave, is returning to Kimberly Ave Jan24th.
- **SOMMERDYK:** Debbi Black's first granddaughter, Payten, was born Nov 5th, 6 lbs 2 oz. Congratulations, Lyndsey!

### Upcoming Video-Conferences:

- "Talk to Me", February 10th—9:30-11:30;
- Couple Therapy & Support, February 12th—10:00-12:30;
- Supporting Adults with Intellectual Disabilities who have Engaged in Sexual Offending Behaviours, March 24th—10:00-12:30;
- Understanding Common Syndromes—March 27th—10:00- 12:30.

Anyone wishing to include an article in the September 2009 issue of "Community Living Connections" may forward their submissions to Sandra McNamara.

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