

SUMMER 2022

# THE STAR



Developmental  
Disabilities Association



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Developmental Disabilities Association is a community living agency that provides over 50 community-based programs and services to children and adults with developmental disabilities and their families in Vancouver and Richmond.

You're invited to our 2021/22 Annual General Meeting

# COVID, COMMUNITY, CLIMATE CHANGE

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Wednesday June 22, 2022  
7 – 8:15 p.m.

Registration begins at 6 p.m.

100-3851 Shell Rd, Richmond

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RSVP to (604) 233-5448 or  
[rsvp@develop.bc.ca](mailto:rsvp@develop.bc.ca)





# WE ARE CHEMO-SAPIENS

**By: Alanna Hendren**

The article about the Reverse Flynn Effect in the last STAR generated more discussion than usual, primarily about why global IQ scores have been falling since 1975. Could it be technology? Technology seems like an easy culprit but the kind of unlimited external memory and processing speed everyone has at their disposal these days was not even imagined in the original Star Trek series. 1975 was my first year at university and I had a choice of a slide rule or a new-on-the-market portable calculator that could determine square roots for the cost of about \$1,000 in 2022 dollars. We used pay phones that cost 10 cents to make calls if we were away from home. We memorized the phone numbers we called or wrote them down on a piece of paper. We talked to our friends face-to-face, without distractions. We did arithmetic in our heads. Computers and game systems only came along in the 1990s, so tech may be blamed for other problems but the main culprit in the lowered IQ mystery seems to be the shocking amounts of industrial chemicals that have built up in our environments and bodies.

In her book **Toxic Cocktail**, Dr. Barbara Demeneix writes about “How Chemical Pollution is Poisoning our Brains”. She exposes the prevalence and toxicity of the chemicals accumulating around the planet and in all living creatures. She then explores what scientists already know about the impact of some of these chemicals on brain development from conception through adulthood and discusses the ten tons of these dangerous industrial chemicals that are released into our soil, atmosphere,

rivers, and oceans every year. These chemicals accumulate in our environments and bodies – they have even been found in the blood of polar bears in the Arctic.

Little research funding is available – a tiny fraction of what multi-national petrochemical companies like Bayer, Dow Chemicals, and Exxon Mobil can pay for lobbyists to arrange for continued environmental de-regulation. Between the 1980s and the present, governments worldwide launched de-regulation initiatives that let all sorts of increasingly potent chemical compounds spew into the global environment with virtually no research on their impacts on life.

To start fixing this problem, the EU published a “restrictions roadmap” that could lead to the prohibition of over 12,000 chemicals because they are pushing some animal species like whales into extinction, interfering with human fertility, and causing two million human deaths per year (according to Arthur Nelsen in the April 25, 2022 issue of the **Guardian**).

Over 190 million synthetic chemicals are registered globally and on average, brand new industrial chemicals are created every 1.4 seconds. The ten tons of 85,000 chemicals placed under the *American Toxic Substances Control Act*, excludes those found in pesticides, cosmetics, and food additives that all contain chemicals now circulating in the blood (and amniotic fluid) of every mammal. Says Dr. Demeneix, “All children born today are exposed, from conception onward to a complex mixture of chemicals”. No one knows the direct impacts of most of

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### What can I do to reduce my chemical exposure?

- Where possible, avoid:
  - Fast or processed foods and processed meats – eat more fresh or frozen fruits, vegetables, and grains
  - Microwaving food in plastic containers
  - Canned foods and drinks
  - Breathing near fields doused with artificial fertilizers
- Eat Hormone-free meat and dairy products
- Use more glass, stainless steel, and paper in your kitchen
- Buy fragrance-free personal care products made naturally
- Use more natural cleaning products (vinegar, baking powder)
- Wash fruits and vegetables well before serving
- Teach your children to avoid plastics and toxic foods.



these chemicals or what their combined impact might be on developing fetuses, children, or aging adults.

Concurrent with this increased toxic chemical exposure, autism rising to 1 of every 45 American children, and 1 out of every 66 Canadian children. ADHD rates have also escalated, and significant IQ drops like the *Reverse Flynn Effect* have been noted. There is very solid proof that the 12,000 chemicals under consideration for regulation by the EU pose a high risk to mammals, including humans, and the overall environment. Most accumulate and some don't degrade. A 2011 U.S. study screened pregnant women for 163 chemicals and over 90% had a minimum of 62 in their blood. Babies born to mothers with high levels of these chemicals have a higher risk of lowered intellectual capacity, autism, and/or ADHD.

Physicians for Social Responsibility ([www.psr.org](http://www.psr.org)) report that chemicals are used in every step of global food production, in fertilizers, preservatives, additives, artificial food coloring, flavor enhancers, artificial hormones, artificial sweeteners, and the plastics that package our food. Some of these chemicals are poisons and some have demonstrated direct negative impacts on human health and behavior. Many preservatives can damage nerve cells and developing brains, and cause drops in IQ. Certain fish may be contaminated with toxic chemicals or heavy metals like mercury and lead, that damage developing brains and lead to behavior disorders, lower IQs, and visual and hearing

problems. These chemicals are found in higher concentrations in young children than in teens or adults.

Still, we have no data about how many chemicals we are exposed to each day, even though we all have artificial chemicals in our bodies. Researchers have found pesticides in the amniotic fluid that surrounds developing fetuses. One can imagine that chemicals can cause ADHD, which is treated with Ritalin - another constellation of chemicals.

Early pregnancy is a very vulnerable time for exposure to toxins because the placenta does not block the passage of chemicals. Some chemical exposure can alter DNA and impact future generations. We are not aware of these chemicals when we breathe, drink, and eat so we can do very little to avoid them. They are all global, just like the increased incidence of autism over the past 40 years. Most manufactured chemicals have accumulated in our environments and within our bodies, year after year.

Like climate change, this is a global problem that requires a global solution because one single country can spew out enough toxic chemical contaminants to cover the planet. Another reason we must all come together and soon.

*Editors Note:* **Dark Waters**, a movie based on a true story about a lawyer fighting DuPont corporation over chemical pollution, is now showing on Netflix and highlights the issues raised in this article.





## Firehall Visit

May 7th was an open house at the No. 1 Richmond Fire Hall at Brighthouse! DDA clients and staff from Curzon house visited and had a lot of fun. They got to meet RCMP officers, fire hall staff, and lots of other first responders. They made many new friends and offered their appreciation for the hard work and sacrifice they give every day.



# GETTING OUT!

## By Alanna Hendren

Finally, after over two years of COVID, PPE, and social isolation at our group homes, I had a chance to get out to visit our amazing residents and staff! It felt great to see everyone doing so well in spite of the challenges we faced. A hearty thanks for the dedication, hard work, creativity, and good humour of our staff, and, of course, the patience of our clients.

I noticed how much we had all aged though and how happy everyone was in spite of the pandemic. This may be because of all the crafts tables, musical instruments, video games, and iPads

scattered throughout most homes. People enjoyed learning, visiting, playing games, and entertaining themselves as well as the many group iPad activities held by our AT department to keep up socialization in spite of physical distance. Staff and residents also participated in courses, activities and celebrations every month, connected by Zoom. Bollywood dancing did not stop.

Still, everyone is really happy the community is opening up and looking forward to getting out of the house and having some fun!

May 8th was Mother's Day! Several of our long-term clients' moms made it out to our group homes. We were happy to see families coming together again after two years of COVID. To all the hard-working moms who sacrifice day in and day out for their family and loved ones. Happy Mother's Day and know that you are appreciated and loved.



## MOTHER'S DAY & EID

Eid al-Fitr is the earlier of the two official holidays celebrated within Islam. The religious holiday is celebrated by Muslims worldwide because it marks the end of the month-long dawn-to-sunset fasting of Ramadan.







# DDA DOCUMENTARY SHOWCASE AT VIFF

**By: Evan Kelly**

DDA's communications team has been hard at work over the past several months putting together an hour-long video called **Doing the Impossible – The Story of the Developmental Disabilities Association**. When it was finished, we held a private screening at the Vancouver International Film Festival Society theatre on Seymour Street in Vancouver. The screening coincided beautifully with DDA's 70th Anniversary with DDA's founding in 1952. The evening event was attended by over 100 DDA staff, clients, family, and friends. The screening was followed by a Q and A where our writer-director, David Ozier talked to the audience about his experience making the film and getting to know the people involved. **Doing the Impossible** can soon be seen in its entirety on our website, [www.develop.bc.ca](http://www.develop.bc.ca).



## By: Ratnam Mathur

I am passionate to work for DDA and was recently reinvigorated after watching the powerfully made documentary film **Doing the Impossible**, directed by the DDA's award-winning filmmaker David Ozier.

In captivating details, the film traced back how this journey started in 1952 with merely a dozen parents, who came together to provide education and a better future for their children who might otherwise have been institutionalized for life, akin to complete abandonment.

In her opening remarks before the screening of the film, Alanna noted that it is essentially a love story. No one in the audience could have watched it without feeling the emotions of deep sadness by seeing the images and listening to the dark accounts of the mistreatment meted out to the young residents at the Woodlands institution. Emotions changed to joy after seeing the ground-breaking path forward by the creation of the association

in the 50s and watching the progressively inspiring accounts and footage of the happier lives of the residents.

David Ozier is a visual storyteller, par-excellence, who has masterfully captured all of the major events along this journey and distilled the essence of it in this nearly hour-long film. In post-film remarks, he recounted his deep personal bonding with the clients and learning firsthand from their families, who spent many hours with him, sharing their personal testimonies and piles of family photo albums. He also told us about roping in the creative illustrators, animators, and film-editor who are the very best in their crafts, to collaborate on this project as a story of social justice that needed to be told.

I am deeply inspired by his persuasive message about the power of passion and conviction and how wide-scale systemic changes in society are possible by the bold actions of single individuals.

I feel privileged to have been invited to watch this eye-opening and educational film and have a lively chat with David at the post-film reception!



## By: Julie Huber

The movie was about how it was in the olden days for people with developmental disabilities. How things have changed our lives [for the better] throughout the years. I was very proud of Alanna Hendren and Tasia for their advocacy for the rights of people with developmental disabilities. The movie showed the life at Woodlands and it feel very sad. The people living there were treated badly.

I was very fortunate that I lived at home with a great, loving family. Over the years, DDA has offered me volunteer work at Berwick preschool at UBC. I've been very lucky to have attended Kwatlan University and worked in a dental office. At DDA I was participating in Holiday Options where we got to travel to such places as Disneyland. At DDA I'm very grateful for Kim's Art class.

## By: Ian Tasker

What a wonderful occasion and what a great title to capture and celebrate 70 years of advocacy, innovation, perseverance, acceptance, and above all, love.

**Doing the Impossible** was excellently crafted and wholeheartedly illustrated how inclusivity and love can lead to substantially better outcomes, personal fulfillment, and joy in the lives of the most vulnerable people in our society. It is both a history lesson of the incredible darkness created by social conditioning, eugenics, and institutionalization and also a tribute to how lives can be forever changed immeasurably better by a few nurturing, devoted, believing "Angels" who refuse to compromise, accept the norm and who truly recognize the beauty within all living beings.

I am incredibly inspired and thankful for the amazing people who have and still are making lives better every day through the DDA. Your patience, humility, gratitude, and commitment are irreplaceable and unequivocal! I am left with three words to describe my feelings from the documentary: never go back.



# GOVERNMENT UPDATES

## **Children and Youth with Support Needs Framework Engagement**

The Ministry of Children and Family Development published the Children and Youth with Support Needs Framework online which describes a vision for a new provincial service-delivery model. The ministry invites families, service providers, and sector partners to participate in an online survey to share their input. Feedback will be considered to refine and support the provincial rollout of the service approach.

The survey will be open from April 20, 2022, to September 9, 2022, and will take approximately eight minutes to complete. You may start, stop, and resume at your pace.

Follow the link for more information: <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/govtogetherbc/consultation/support-needs-engagement/>

## **Accessibility and the Canada Revenue Agency 2022 CRA Accessibility Plan**

On July 11, 2019, the Accessible Canada Act was enacted – formalizing the Government of Canada’s commitment to proactively identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility wherever individuals interact with federal programs. A goal of the Act aims to make Canada barrier-free by 2040.

To support this goal, the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) will invite persons with disabilities and their caregivers across Canada to participate in a consultation process. Their input will be considered to inform the CRA’s first-ever Accessibility Plan, set to be published by December 31, 2022.

This engagement process is being led and implemented by Delaney on behalf of the Canada Revenue Agency.

For more information on how to take part, follow the link: <https://craconsultationarc.ca/#s2>





# UKRAINE VIGIL

**By: Evan Kelly**

It's hard to ignore what's going on in the world today. The Russian invasion of Ukraine and the suffering that people there are going through is very hard to watch, much less understand. Many of our clients feel strongly that what is happening is wrong and offer their support. They took part in a vigil for Ukraine at the Vancouver Art Gallery. Our thoughts are with the people of Ukraine.



# TECH REVIEWS

**Product:**

Companion Pet Cat

**Producer:**

Joy for All

**Cost:**

\$124 USD (but available from various suppliers at differing price points)

**Category:**

Device

**Sub-category:**

Support



The Companion Pet Cat is a support device produced by Joy For All and sold through a variety of online retailers. The device has been designed to look, feel and sound like an actual cat and give the user a close to lifelike experience. The Companion Pet Cat responds to user interactions, such as petting or brushing (brush included), and will move and purr to give sensory feedback to the user. This device is marketed towards an elderly demographic, specifically for those with dementia.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Available in 3 colours: orange, grey, and black;
- Easy set-up (add batteries and flip the on/off switch);
- Subtle sensory feedback to provide self-regulatory support without becoming distracting;
- Purring and breathing patterns encourage the user to naturally match their own breathing pattern with the device, which can be calming for individual in mid-late stage dementia and those experiencing sundowning symptoms.

## LOWLIGHTS

- Not 100% realistic, both visually and with movement, making this a less ideal option for those with early stage dementia;
- Movement mechanisms have little padding, adding risk of damage if dropped or thrown;
- Though weighted, the device is quite light; users who are seeking proprioceptive feedback may be best to pair this device with a weighted lap blanket;
- Not possible to move body or limbs of the Companion Pet Cat to place to different positions, which may make the device appear less realistic for the user.

## STAR RATINGS

**Ease of use:**

*grab and go* ★★★★★

**Adaptability:**

*some personalization possible* ★★★★★★

**Accessibility:**

*suitable for almost all users* ★★★★★★

**Cost vs value:**

*worthwhile expense* ★★★★★★

**Overall rating:**

★★★★★★★

## FINAL WORD

The Companion Pet Cat has been designed to meet dementia needs based on scientifically backed studies. Animatronic pets have been shown to decrease anxiety and agitation in individuals with dementia and encourage a calming response from the user, similar to that experienced through the use of live therapy animals.

Regardless of the brand, animatronic dementia support pets are best introduced when the individual is in mid-stage dementia and work particularly well for those experiencing sundowning symptoms. The support pet should always be introduced as a “pet” and not as a “toy”. Users should be encouraged to name their new pet and engage with it during times when they would typically engage with a live animal – for example, having a cat sit on your lap while watching tv. When introduced in mid-stage dementia, the individual is able to develop a bond with the animal, much like you would with a teddy bear, and find comfort and security through that bond.

In late-stage dementia this bond provides the attachment needed for the user to instinctively respond to the device when escalated, matching their breathing pattern with the slow regular pattern of the dementia pet and in turn, calming down. This is a similar response experienced when placing a wrapped clock or hot water bottle beside a newly separated kitten – because of the familiarity of the faux heartbeat and warmth, the kitten is comforted and calmed even though it is not actually its mother beside it.

Joy For All has created a quality dementia support device that is easy to set up and use. Because there are various suppliers through which to access the device, it may be possible to find the Companion Pet Cat at a reduced price to make purchasing this support more affordable. Overall, there are scientifically demonstrated benefits to introducing an animatronic support pet for individuals with dementia, and for individuals supporting someone through this stage of life, this may be a worthwhile expense to consider.

# KNITTING WITH DEBBIE



Over the course of 2021, DDA client Debra Marsden (or Debbie, as she's known to her family and friends) embarked on a challenging knitting project. She worked on it independently at home, night and day, completing it in November 2021, just in time for winter.

She used patterns from a vintage knitting magazine she's had for many years. She often showed off her progress to her Life Skills Worker, Ethan Minuk, from DDA's Community Apartment Program. They sat down together for an interview for The Star Newsletter recently, so Debbie could tell her story in her own words:

"I made a shell, a sweater, and a headband out of orange wool. I enjoyed wearing it. I made it too big for me, but I wanted to have some room in it to move around. It's very nice. I made it with my own two hands, and my eyes. It's beautiful. When I was seven years old, my mom taught me how to knit and crochet."

Debbie was proud to model her new sweater set for a photo for The Star Newsletter and wears it often. Everyone is eager to see what she makes next!

# THANK YOU RIVER ROCK CASINO!

Tired? Overwhelmed? How does a free night at the RiverRock sound?! After being on hold due to Covid-19, the Family Support Program is excited to bring back the Respitality program! With the generosity of the RiverRock hotel, we are able to provide a few lucky parents with a free one-night stay, to rest and recharge.

The hotel stay is for parents only, which means parents need to make their own arrangements for their child(ren). This program is available for DDA members who have a child with a developmental disability living at home. Not a member yet? Follow this link to learn more: <https://www.develop.bc.ca/become-a-member/>

If you would like to apply for the Respitality Program, please contact the Family Support Program at 604-327-9111 to inquire. We would like to extend our immense thanks and appreciation to the RiverRock Casino Resort, for their generous donation!



# CINCO DE MAYO

Cinco de Mayo, which simply means the 5th of May in Spanish, is a celebration that recognizes the anniversary of the Mexican victory of the second French empire at the battle of Puebla, in 1862. It is a festivity that is more popular in the United States than in Mexico, having grown as a global celebration of Mexican culture, cuisine and heritage. In Mexico, their biggest national celebration is their declaration of Independence from Spain on September 16, 1810.

On a wet afternoon at our Arlington townhouse complex, we had our own Cinco de Mayo celebration. The tents were erected and decorations were hung as amazing homemade food was prepared. Of those attending, one resident, Rafael, at Azure, was originally from Mexico along with another resident at Worthington who is from El Salvador. Additionally, we have two staff that are also from El Salvador, Rosie from Arlington, and Ana from E. 45th. They were both instrumental in bringing

an authentic flair to our celebration. Rosie made traditional tissue paper flowers with the residents and brought the popular Mexican 'Jarritos' soda beverages. Ana started cooking at 7:30am to provide an amazing Latin feast for the 40 people in attendance.

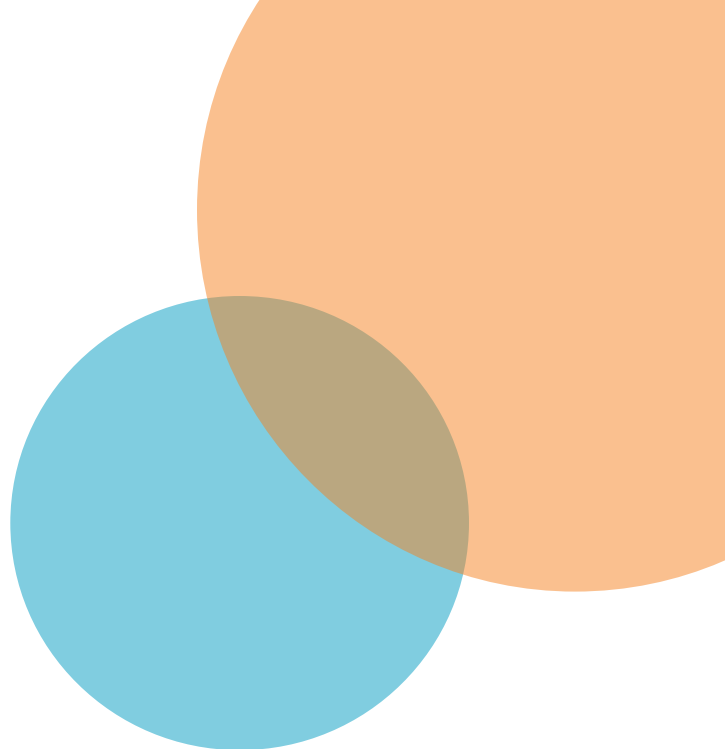
On our festive day we did not let the downpour of rain dampen our party mood. Ana and Rosie gave us a Spanish lesson and explained the history of Cinco de Mayo, and its traditional food and heritage. Rafael and Victor were also invited to participate, to acknowledging their heritage. There was lots of good music, arts, and food! The delicious homemade food, live music and opportunity to be with friends, brought all elements of a grand celebration – which refused to allow spirits to be dampened by rain. Everyone who attended are already asking when the next party is going to be! Hasta la Proxima Fiesta (until the next party)!





# JOBS WEST

Jobs West had a booth set up at the Spectrum Works Virtual Job Fair in April 2022. This job fair was specifically created for individuals on the Autism Spectrum who were seeking employment. It was the first-ever job fair that had some of Canada's top employers interacting with people living with ASD across three Canadian cities. It was a great opportunity to connect with inclusive employers and speak with job seekers interested in obtaining and securing meaningful employment.



## A QUICK LOOK INTO

# WORKPLACE INCLUSIVITY



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Developmental  
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# NEWSLETTER

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RICHMOND, BC CANADA V6X 2W2  
Canadian Publication Agreement Number 40011236

The Star is a quarterly external publication of the Developmental Disabilities Association.  
We welcome your comments and feedback. Kindly direct all comments and submissions to [communications@develop.bc.ca](mailto:communications@develop.bc.ca).