THE STAR

SUMMER 2025

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Developmental Disabilities Association

A short message from Executive Director:

MARK ZUBERBUHLER

It has been a busy couple of months since I started at DDA. It has been a real pleasure meeting everyone and learning about the history of the organization, the people served and all of the various initiatives the organization has been involved with.

I have had the opportunity to meet with several funders and those who believe in the mission. There will be a number of upcoming strategic conversations with board members, the executive team and key stakeholders to determine the direction moving forward.

Thank you to all who have extended a warm welcome and I am looking forward to the upcoming year.

DDA Increases Scholarships for High School Students with Developmental Disabilities

The Developmental Disabilities Association is proud to support the educational goals of high school students with developmental disabilities in Vancouver and Richmond. This year, DDA has increased its annual scholarship amount to $1,000 per recipient, recognizing the rising cost of living and the importance of inclusive opportunities for all students.

At DDA, we know that scholarships are often for the high achievers, but ours is to recognize different learners who have to work hard and overcome obstacles to reach their goals. By investing in these young individuals, DDA continues its commitment to fostering independence, growth, and community inclusion.

We typically offer one scholarship to each high school in the Vancouver and Richmond districts, and this year, 30 were given out. School staff or support professionals are encouraged to nominate students who demonstrate perseverance, commitment to personal development, and a positive impact on their school community.

Arlington 55C and 99CD Staff and Clients Remember the Victims of the Lapu Lapu Tragedy

By Jane Wang

On Saturday, April 26th, the unthinkable happened. A man drove an SUV into a crowd of people during the Lapu Lapu festival in Vancouver, killing 11 people and injuring many more.

Little more than a week later, on Sunday, May 4th, several staff and clients from our Arlington group homes gathered on Fraser Street at 41st Avenue to pay their respects to the victims of this devastating incident.

During this somber occasion, we expressed our condolences by presenting flowers and praying for those affected. Our Filipino team member, Eve Ferrer, eloquently stated, "May we stand together for our communities against senseless tragedies. Mental health is an integral aspect of every human!"

Clients Pamela Deo and Daniella Katz lit candles as gestures of respect, while Arada Ratsamythong contributed flowers to the memorial. Additionally, our team signed the online condolence book to further honour and support those impacted.

Furthermore, our staff member Ibis Cubillos expressed heartfelt condolences in the Condolence Book, sharing, "My condolences to the Filipino Community. I was so heartbroken when I heard the news. I will be praying for those who were affected and suffering from this tragedy." We stand united in remembrance and support during this difficult time, reaffirming our commitment to fostering community resilience and compassion.

Department Name Change: Residential Services is Now *Living Options*

By Donna Cain, Director of Living Options

We're pleased to share that, as of April 2025, the department formerly known as *Residential Services* has officially been renamed *Living Options*. The new name reflects our commitment to choice and autonomy, recognizing that individuals deserve to live in settings that are meaningful, empowering, and aligned with their personal preferences.

This name change not only reflects the diverse and person-centered supports we provide but also initiates a thoughtful and intentional process for better describing the services we provide. Our department had been called Residential Services for decades, but the term "residential" is increasingly recognized as perpetuating a colonial narrative. It fails to acknowledge the deep-rooted historical trauma and ongoing harm caused by residential schools and other institutional systems designed to assimilate Indigenous children into a Euro-Canadian society.

Today, for some individuals and communities across Canada, using the term "residential" in service contexts can unintentionally reinforce feelings of disempowerment, exclusion, or trauma. As part of our broader commitment to inclusion, respect, and reconciliation, we have reviewed our department's name and how it aligns with our organizational values. After reflection, we determined that a renaming is both appropriate and necessary at this time.

As the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) reminds us, reconciliation is an ongoing process that requires engagement. Renaming our department is a small but significant step towards this commitment. It marks a shift away from institutional terminology and moves us toward a more inclusive, respectful, and forward-looking expression of our work.

Although we have changed our name, our commitment to providing high-quality, individualized services remains the same. This update more accurately represents who we are, what we do, and the values that steer us. Thank you for supporting this important evolution in our language and our practice.

The Importance of People with Disabilities Voting in Canada's Federal Election

By Evan Kelly

In Canada, voting is a fundamental right, and it's crucial that people with disabilities of any kind fully participate in federal elections. With nearly 6.2 million Canadians identifying as having a disability, their voices represent a significant portion of the population. Yet barriers such as inaccessible polling stations, lack of transportation, or limited election information in accessible formats have historically made voting more difficult.

Despite that, many of DDA's clients made it to the polling stations, cast their ballots, and helped shape the future of our great country. We are very proud that they want their say in what happens in Canada. And a big thank you to DDA's staff who were instrumental in getting people to the polls.

When people with disabilities vote, they help shape policies that directly impact their lives — from healthcare and housing to employment and accessibility standards. Their votes hold politicians accountable and ensure that disability rights stay at the forefront of national conversations.

DDA Managers Complete Leadership Training

Several DDA managers recently completed an intensive leadership training program, strengthening their skills in team development, conflict resolution, and strategic thinking.

At DDA, we're proud to invest in the continued growth of our staff. Through leadership development, mentorship, and professional training opportunities, we help our teams build fulfilling careers while delivering the highest quality support to the individuals and families we serve. Congratulations to all the managers who took this important step in their leadership journey!

Retiring After 30 Years with DDA

After 30 years of dedicated service, Yoko Iemoto is retiring from DDA's Child Development Centres. Throughout her career, Yoko contributed her care and commitment across multiple sites—including the original Playhouse, Waterside, and Kids in General.

She took a five-year leave when her son was born, but returned with the same passion and dedication that defined her career. Even in her final days on site, Yoko was still sweeping floors and preparing for summer programs—a testament to her tireless work ethic and love for the children she supported.

Yoko is retiring to spend more time with her family and is currently in Japan visiting her mother and sister, where she'll be staying for the next month. We wish her all the best in this next chapter and thank her for everything she's given over the years.

DDA Staff and Clients Shine at the 2025 Vancouver Sun Run

By Ratnam Mathur

This year, over 50 staff and clients from the Developmental Disabilities Association laced up their running shoes and proudly took part in the annual Vancouver Sun Run — one of Canada's largest and most celebrated community races.

The spirit of the event was unmistakable as participants from all walks of life came together to celebrate health, inclusion, and perseverance. For the DDA team, it was not just about crossing the finish line but about demonstrating the strength and determination that their community represents every day.

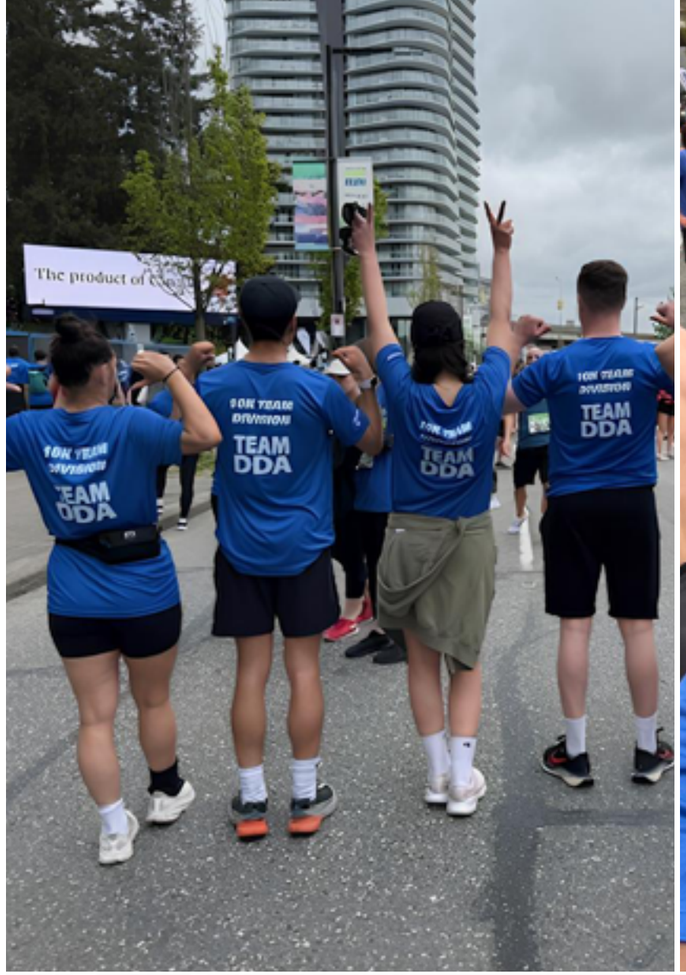
A special highlight of this year's race was DDA client Henrik Nashlund's inspiring participation. Henrik, who lives at DDA's Curzon group home, tackled the challenge with incredible enthusiasm and resilience. Cheered on by his support team and fellow runners, Henrik showed that the true victory lies in the courage to show up, push personal limits, and have fun along the way.

During the Sun Run, Henrik walked while taking in the lively atmosphere, enjoying the music, the bands playing along the route, and the many people on the streets cheering the participants on. With his two dedicated staff members, Karen and Sooraj, walking and cheering beside him, Henrik completed an impressive 8.5 kilometers.

We are incredibly proud of his achievement – it's something he has been actively doing for many years. After the run, Henrik celebrated by enjoying lunch at his favorite restaurant and returned home feeling happy, relaxed, and fulfilled. We are deeply proud of both Henrik and his wonderful staff, Karen and Sooraj, for their support and encouragement in helping him reach his goal.

In addition, Minoru staff member Ivan Kamurasi proudly hit the pavement for Team DDA alongside more than 50 employees!

The Vancouver Sun Run continues to be a platform where individuals like Henrik can shine, and where organizations like DDA can showcase the power of community, inclusion, and unwavering support. Congratulations to all the DDA runners for a fantastic race!



Earth Day and Curzon House

Discover Surrey organised Party for the Planet on Earth Day, April 22nd, with live music, food trucks, dance battles, rock climbing, plant sales, and many more activities all day long. They had welcoming ceremony with the Mayor and Council.

Curzon residents and staff enjoyed the event, took part in different activities, music, dance, and learned how to keep our planet safe and clean. They bought a few tomato plants to grow in their garden back at Curzon.

What a Treat! Ice Cream Day at Fraser

By Sonia Cramer

On Friday, May 2nd, the Fraser Day Program's recycling volunteers treated the whole program to an ice cream event featuring two types of ice cream with 10 different kinds of toppings.

Our recycling crew works hard every week collecting bottles and returning them to the recycling depot. As the weeks go by, the money they collect adds up. Luckily for us, they decided to share their profits with all of us! Their idea was to have an ice cream bar like you find at the best buffet restaurants.

Our cooking class chopped up fresh strawberries and bananas and made blueberry sauce. They grated chocolate, smashed Skor bars, and hand-whipped cream. To top it all off, there were chocolate and caramel sauces, and colourful sprinkles.

After lunch, we all enjoyed a bowl of ice cream with custom toppings, and it was so good. What a sweet way to end the week! Thank you to the volunteers.

Camsell Residents Celebrate a Fun-Filled St. Patrick's Day!

Our Camsell residents had a wonderful time celebrating St. Patrick's Day this year! The day was filled with laughter, music, and plenty of green. Residents enjoyed festive decorations, music, and some even donned their best green attire and joined in a spirited parade around the community!

The highlight of the day was a live performance by a local musician, who played traditional Irish tunes that had everyone tapping their toes. Thank you to all the staff who made the day so special. It was a truly memorable St. Patrick's Day at Camsell!

The BC People First Self-Advocacy Conference 2025

By Marie Putman – Self-Advocate

Once again, DDA sponsored the BC People's First Conference, which was held from March 17th to March 21, 2025. The BC People's First Society is a non-profit organization that is part of the International People's First movement. It is made up of self-advocates from different regions around the province. The vision of BC People's First is to help stop the stigma that surrounds intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The goal of the BC People's First is not to have others speak for us, as individuals living with a disability, but to have our self-advocates advocate to governments about the issues of relevance to us. Some of the things that do matter to people with a disability are: employment with fair wages, and having a living wage. Affordable housing and access to transportation. Having inclusive and non- segregated communities.

On March 17, DDA held a conference for individuals supported by DDA to come to the head office to participate in games such as Rights Bingo. The game allowed us to learn about our rights as citizens of BC. Prizes were given out to anyone who won the game. Lunch was provided and it gave us a time to meet with our friends and discuss things that matter to us, where we want change or support. The AT departments also had a game for us discussing our rights. Everyone was so engaged. This was a fun day, and everyone had a group photo taken wearing our T-shirts for the BC People's First Conference.

On Friday, March 21, a few of us went to Grandville Island to the community centre to partake in some sessions with guest speakers. These were self-advocates from BC whom talked about our rights. I learned that I am a self advocate. Again, we were able to play some games for prizes. My housemates Julie and Victor won some nice prizes.

Currently, there is a lot of uncertainty for marginalized groups from around the World, where rights are being removed. Having something like the People's First Conference is so vital for all of us living with a disability, as it creates space where we can use our voices to discuss what matters to each one of us. A space to learn about our rights. A platform to ensure we do not loose our rights as equally participating citizens.

DDA Leisure Fair

By Colleen Thomas

For years, I have volunteered with other child development centre managers at the Leisure Fair. While I do not recall how many I've attended, I do recall the heart warming feeling each year the fair approaches. The sense of community, on this annual afternoon, is hard to miss.

As part of the Early Learning department, there is a group of us who lead the children's play area for the evening. We typically have an art and some fidget or other table top toys for the youngest visitors. This allows parents, or guardians, to wonder and gather information without having to watch over their child. DDA values family-centred practice, and we also try to incorporate that in our events, when possible.

The fair serves as a way to network and gather information on resources that provide inclusion and adaptations for children with various abilities, who often have some form of support needs. The room typically fills with laughter and a few hugs when we host annual visitors and some past graduating families. Some attendees are regular presenters, making the night feel like a reunion for many of us. Additionally, the night provides an opportunity for team building within our department and with others in the association whom we may not regularly see or engage with. This fosters growth on both small and large scales as we connect to the valuable work of inclusive care. All of this is where community is truly seen and felt.

While the need for certain types of activities may change or adapt based on individual preferences, the constant truth is that community is essential for everyone. I am grateful to work for a leading organization that makes an impact and fosters change in inclusive care while also striving to create communities that encourage connections on many levels by hosting the Leisure Fair each year

UVIC Basketball Ball Game

The Victoria Day Program had the opportunity to attend a University Basketball game of one of the staff members' old teams in March. The USports Men's National Basketball Nationals were hosted in Vancouver at the UBC campus from March 13th-16th, and the first game took place at UBC Thunderbird Stadium on Thursday at 11 am. The University of Victoria Vikes Men's Basketball team was ranked #1 overall heading into the tournament, and in their first game, they faced off against Bishop's University. It was an exciting game; we had fun cheering on the teams!

In the end, the Vikes won the game 85-73, and later went on the win the National Championship! We all had a fantastic time!

DDA Staff and Clients Stand Together on Pink Shirt Day

On this year's Pink Shirt Day, DDA staff and clients came together to take a stand against bullying and show their commitment to building an inclusive, respectful community for all.

Dressed proudly in pink, participants across DDA programs and offices took part in activities and discussions that reinforced the importance of kindness, empathy, and standing up for one another. Pink Shirt Day is a powerful reminder that bullying has no place in our communities — and that by working together, we can create safe, supportive spaces where everyone feels valued.

At DDA, inclusion isn't just something we celebrate one day a year — it's at the heart of everything we do. Supporting people of all abilities means fostering a culture where respect, acceptance, and diversity are woven into daily life. Pink Shirt Day is an opportunity to reaffirm these values and continue moving toward a more compassionate

Current Support Groups

(all offer translation services)

Vietnamese Family Support Group / Nhóm Hỗ trợ Gia đình Việt Nam

Meets the second Thursday of the month at 6:30 pm at 3455 Kaslo Street (DDA Kaslo office). Refreshments and childcare are provided. Want to join, or looking for more information? Contact Jessica at **crystalrain_05@yahoo.com**

Twinkle Stars (Japanese) Family Support Group / 日系ファミリーサポートグループ

This group is for Japanese families who are supporting a family member (of any age) with a developmental disability. Meets in person approx. once every two months. Interpretation and refreshments provided. Want to join, or looking for more information? Contact Chigusa at **twinklestars2017@hotmail.com**

Chinese Family Support Group / 中文家庭援助小组

This group is for Chinese families who are supporting a family member (of any age) with a developmental disability. This group primarily meets virtually, but does offer in-person meetings as well. Refreshments and childcare provided (for in-person meetings). Want to join, or looking for more information? Contact Katherine at **katsalon@hotmail.com**

Vancouver Parents Transition Group

A support group for parents to youth and young adults with a developmental disability, who are transitioning to adulthood. Meets once per month on Wednesday evenings and Saturday morning (alternating locations each month). Refreshments provided. Want to join, or looking for more information? Contact Liz and Yuko at **transitionparents@gmail.com**

Upside Down Family Support Group

A social support group for parents who have children diagnosed with Down Syndrome. Meets the 4th Saturday of the month (alternating locations between Vancouver and North Vancouver) at 10:00am. Refreshments provided. Want to join, or looking for more information? Contact Paul at **upsidedownplaygroup@gmail.com**

Filipino Family Support Group

This is a brand new group, created for Filipino families who are supporting a loved one with a developmental disability. Want to join, or looking for more information? Contact Angela Gagne at **agagne@develop.bc.ca**

And of course, please feel free to contact the DDA Family Support program at 604-327-9111 anytime for more information about the above groups. Hope to see you there!

FREE WORKSHOP ON TENANT RIGHTS

Renting in the Lower Mainland can come with challenges, and it is important to know your rights as a tenant.

Our presenters **TRAC (Tenant Resource & Advocacy Centre)** specialize in educating and protecting renters across British Columbia.

Please join us as the DDA Family Support Program hosts this free information session.

Hope to see you there!

JUNE 4TH 10:00AM

Virtual workshop OR projected live stream at Kaslo office (3455 Kaslo Street)

Interested in attending?

RVSP to Dominika Piekarczyk at dpiekarczyk@develop.bc.ca by May 23rd 2025.

Developmental Disabilities Association

TRAC
TENANT RESOURCE & ADVISORY CENTRE

Tech Review

Tech Review: Forest

Product: Forest: Focus for Productivity

Producer: SEEKRTECH CO., LTD

Category: App

Cost: $3.99 USD

Compatibility: iOS

Sub-Category: Executive Functioning

Product Summary

Forest is a time management app which uses the pomodoro technique to encourage focus and attending to tasks. The app has the user 'plant' a tree which grows over a set time. If the device is used during that time interval, the tree withers.

Highlights

- A variety of different trees to plant are available through unlocks that can be achieved by completing focus times successfully;
- Users can collect coins which can then be cashed in to plant a real tree;
- Possible to view timelines and review focus data to determine what ratio of work-to-break is most productive.

Lowlights

- Focus sounds are locked behind a paywall until the user complete enough sessions to purchase them with in-game currency;

Last Word

Forest uses a proven work/break strategy and is effective in reducing screentime while rewarding users with gamification of focus times. This app is ideal for supporting clients who struggle to put down the screen to attend to other tasks.

Star Ratings

Ease of Use ★★★★☆
Easy with Practice

Adaptability: ★★★★☆
Wide Variety of Settings Available

Accessibility: ★★★★☆
Broad Range of Users Served

Cost vs. Value: ★★★☆☆
You Get What You Paid For

Overall Rating: ★★★★☆

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We welcome your comments and feedback. Kindly direct all comments and submissions to communications@develop.bc.ca.