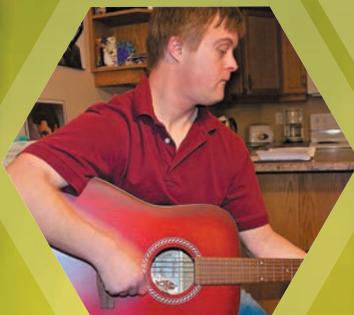


FOCUS

Communitas Supportive Care Society



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THE CLUSTER

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Kelowna Cluster

A Place of Support

A group of honeybees is sometimes called a “cluster”. Honeybees are social creatures who depend on one another. Each bee performs specific tasks to make the whole cluster function as it should. One of the byproducts of this cluster arrangement, of course, is honey – the sweet nectar that keeps the group alive.

In Kelowna, Bryan, David, Regg and Russ live in the same apartment complex, each with their own apartment. These men also form a supportive “Cluster”: each man is unique and has specific work to do but these friends also support one another making their lives rich and sweet like honey.

When we visit the Cluster, the daily dinner is being prepared in Regg’s suite. The smell of chicken pot pie baking in the oven fills the kitchen. Bryan prepares the Caesar salad while Regg sets the table. Russ helps get the pies out of the oven and David says grace. There is conversation and laughter as the men talk about what they’ve done during the day. They are sensitive to each other’s needs: Bryan remembers that David has a hard time chewing, so makes a separate Caesar salad for him without the crunchy croutons. They acknowledge the sadness that Russ must be feeling as he just heard that a relative passed away. In every way, the Cluster is a caring, supportive community that ensures each one’s physical and emotional needs are met.

Amy Schultz who, until recently, oversaw the Communitas’ programs in the Okanagan, says that the Cluster arrangement is a good balance between independence and support.

“Living in the Cluster lets the men live in their own style and in their own space, while still having a sense of community with the other men,” Amy says.

Family members are pleased with this living arrangement. Regg and Russ’s parents, Vern and Marge, have been part of Communitas since their sons were young boys. They are thankful that Regg and Russ and the others are so well supported.

“It gives us peace of mind knowing that they have stability but are also encouraged to use their abilities,” Marge says.

Bryan’s parents, Dorothy and Gordon, know that their son is supported but that he also has a full measure of independence.

“I like it that they have dinner together because I know he gets a decent meal each day,” Dorothy says. “It gives me and my husband peace of mind knowing there’s always someone to look out for the guys.”

David’s sister, Ilanna agrees.

“It’s really nice to know that you’re not doing the big things in life alone,” she says. “Communitas’ ability to adapt to the needs of the people that it serves is what makes it very good.”



Read this full story when you visit communitascare.com



Bryan has a rich and full life. He enjoys his job as a Service Clerk at the local Safeway, where he's worked for 7 years. He's also active in his community, going bowling, taking part in a men's group and volunteering at the YMCA and at his church. He loves music and is a huge Elvis fan. He plays guitar and piano and enjoys Karaoke. His favourite TV show is wrestling.



David greets us with a song as we enter his suite and he beams with pride as we applaud. David is a researcher and it is a privilege to be allowed into his office where his typewriter sits on his large, elegant desk. He has dozens of historical books and videos and he painstakingly records numbers using stencils, HB pencils and yellow legal pads. Although David can be serious, he also has a great sense of humour.



Meet the Cluster Companions

Regg is a quiet guy with a warm smile and a big heart. His home reflects some of his interests: his comfy chair sits in a corner by the window where he can listen to music. There are photos from summer camping trips in the family RV. A calendar from Sunshine Farms hangs on the wall and shows off some of the activities he participates in when he visits there to volunteer twice a week.



Russ welcomes us to his neat and tidy apartment. He shows us his Special Olympics trophies and medals. He loves hockey and is a big Trevor Linden fan. A huge baseball cap collection is neatly organized on a bookshelf. He loves his job at the local lumber yard where he has worked for 22 years, helping customers load items into their vehicles. He also volunteers at Sunshine Farms where he helps in the greenhouse.



Who will...?



Who will take care of our children? – question posed by parents of adult children with disabilities

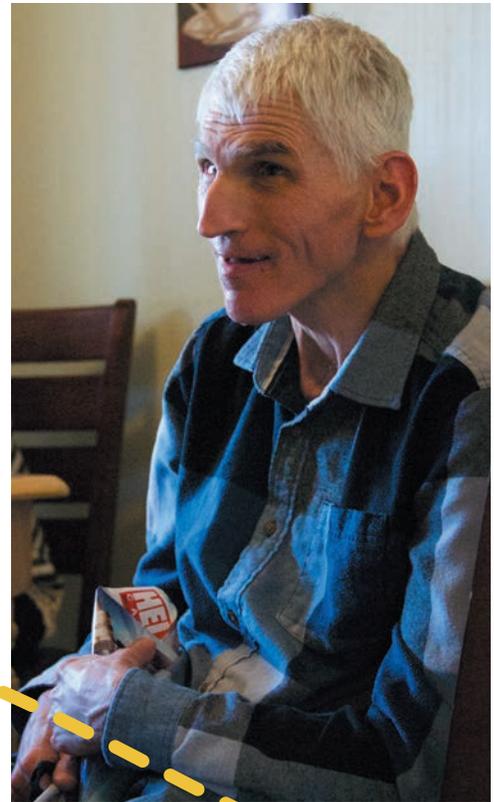


*By Karyn Santiago,
Chief Executive Officer*

When I think of the opportunity we have to serve people with disabilities in the Okanagan, I am reminded again how Communitas continues to evolve as a response to a need and the answer to this question: who will care for our children? It was this question that drove parents in the Fraser Valley to go to their pastors and those pastors to approach Mennonite Central Committee BC - where Communitas has its roots - looking for help. The same is true of our work in the Okanagan. Vern and Marge Borne advocated for this work to be done in Kelowna where they lived with their sons, Russ and Regg, both of whom live with Fragile X. The Borne family had participated in the annual family retreats organized by Communitas and they felt that a faith-based care provider was needed in the Okanagan.

That's how it began. That it continues is due to the dedicated, faithful staff who do this work with genuine love for the people they serve. The story of Russ and Regg and their Cluster-mates David and Bryan, told through the metaphor of

a “beehive” aptly captures the essence of their lives. We also tell you about Mark and Paul and the dedicated staff who care for them in Penticton. All of these stories remind us that being connected in community offers a sweetness born of relationship. As you read these stories, we hope you are as inspired as we have been in telling them!





Friendships Make This House a Home



Mark and Paul have been roommates for more than 20 years. They have very distinct personalities and enjoy doing different things. Paul's favourite pastime is going on trips or for long drives, Mark prefers shorter drives. Paul always enjoys the attention he gets from friends and caregivers. Mark can take it or leave it, often preferring his alone time.



The men also have lots in common. They both look forward to meal time and have healthy appetites. They enjoy socializing, whether it's having visitors in their own home or attending social

events with friends. They both have a great sense of humour and love to laugh. They like being out in their community in Penticton where they are well known.

Many of the staff who serve in their home have done so for several years. This means they have come to know the men very well and are able to communicate with them despite the fact that they are both non-verbal.

“Mark and Paul both respond to the genuine love and care they receive, often laughing and joking with their caregivers,” says the manager of the home, who has been there for 19 years.

These long-term relationships – the relationship between Mark and Paul and the relationships they've built with the staff who care for them – are the key ingredient to creating a home that is truly a place of belonging.



Read their full story about these friendships when you visit communitascare.com



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those who serve, that we might live
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