



A message from the Co-Editor *Maria Glaze*

Greetings Everyone!

Welcome to our Spring Issue of VelaVision! In this issue we focus on stories about Individualized Funding (IF). We have a long history with Individualized Funding in B.C., reaching back to the 70's. Since that time, many families and individuals recognized the creativity, self-determination and person-centred planning made possible with IF and had been advocating for the option again. Community Living B.C. (CLBC) listened.

providing services to those accessing IF, Vela is enjoying the opportunity to grow and learn along with families and CLBC staff. We've all faced challenges in learning how best to provide assistance to individuals and families through this option, but the spirit of cooperation and mutual support has gone a long way to improve our abilities to work as a team. We've been very appreciative of the hard work done by the CLBC staff to join in this work. What is clear from the stories shared in this newsletter, utilizing IF has meant "good lives in welcoming communities."

We are also proud and delighted to tell you about an award Vela received from our sister organization, the Family Support Institute.

We hope spring has reached everyone across our province and hope to see many of you at our **AGM, Tuesday June 25 at 7:00 pm. We will be holding it again at the Cameron Recreation Centre, Burnaby.**

Sincerely,
Maria Glaze
Maria Glaze, Co-Editor

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CLBC also recognized that Vela had unique expertise to offer individuals wanting IF. For over 20 years, Vela's team has been providing information and support to people interested in Microboards - assistance with planning; information on the role as employer; managing budgets; and working with staff. So when CLBC offered Individualized Funding as a payment option to families, they also contracted with Vela to expand our support to include information and support to people interested in IF. Still a work in progress, CLBC staff across the province continue to learn about the policies and regulations that govern IF and, as with many new things, there have been a few bumps along the way. Through our role

Linda Perry introduced me to Barb, Richard and Heather over lunch at a Langley restaurant. It was wonderful to learn what a small, committed group of people can achieve, and what access to Individualized Funding has meant for Richard. I also thoroughly enjoyed sharing a meal with such great people!

It was wonderful to learn what a small, committed group of people can achieve, and what access to Individualized Funding has meant for Richard

Richard and Barb are brother and sister. They moved into a Langley townhome together over 3 years ago. Both Richard and Barb have full lives, rich with many good friends. Barb receives funding as Richard's homeshare provider. Their friend Heather acts as the Agent for Richard's Individualized Funding and is also named as Richard's Representative in his Representation Agreement.

Richard enjoys his independence. For nine years he has worked at a pub in North Delta where he is very well known. Since his move to Langley, Richard takes the bus to his North Delta job two days a week. Richard is quite a traveling man and delights in hopping on buses, sky trains, and even the sea bus, riding all around the Lower Mainland. He makes a plan for where he wants to go for the day and heads out. When Richard is out on his adventures, he has a cell phone in case he needs to reach someone. Daily walks are also part of Richard's routine, and he enjoys exploring his community. Barb says everywhere he goes people know him and like him. Barb has a wide circle of friends in the Langley area, and many people have gotten to know Richard through her. It was really important to Barb that part of the transition for Richard moving in with her was seeing



Out for lunch with Heather, Richard & Barb

him develop a broader network of people in his life. She can see that dream has come true.

Three years ago, Richard was living at home with their mom and dad. Their parents were aging, had health concerns, and Barb knew it was time for a transition for both Richard and their parents. Barb wanted to plan proactively and not wait until there was a family emergency.

Barb knew Linda and had been hearing about Individualized Funding for a number of years. Over three years ago, they began planning with Richard to access IF. With Vela's support, they developed a plan for Richard, which they took to a CLBC Facilitator. Barb and Heather learned that a required step by CLBC was for someone to be the Agent and receive the funding. The Agent also had to be Richard's Representative. Barb could not be the Agent, as the plan was for her to receive funding as the homeshare provider. With support from Nidus, Richard added Heather as a Representative.

Heather said it wasn't an easy process to access IF. There were many steps to go

through to access the funding. It was all very new to her, so she had to ask Linda many questions. CLBC required a homeshare study, so they arranged for an approved agency to do the study. It was a very busy time for Heather and Barb ensuring they met the requirements, such as having fire extinguishers, emergency exit plans, working smoke detectors, an emergency preparedness kit, Criminal Record searches, Driver's Abstracts, etc. Heather set up a bank account in trust for Richard so the funding from CLBC would be separate from her personal finances.

Heather walked herself through the online forms for monthly reporting, knowing if she had problems she could contact Vela anytime. She finds if she stays on top of all the paperwork, it doesn't take much time. It only takes her about 10 minutes to do the report on the computer, print it off, and send it in.

Heather was surprised when the contract ended after the first year. She had expected it just to continue and then received a call saying she had to get to the office to review and sign the new contract right away. There was a glitch in all the paperwork getting processed, and their

A Social Invitation cont'

contract was delayed – no funding came for 3 months. Barb and Heather remember that as a very stressful time. Barb had to borrow money to live, and the bank took money out of Heather's personal account to cover a cheque that bounced before they knew the contract had been delayed.

Heather has been learning a great deal in her role as Agent for IF. She's learned to initiate contact with CLBC regarding contract renewal and has helped her bank to understand more about the purpose of the separate account.

Barb has always known that Richard would live with her one day, and she knows that some day he will likely live on his own. Richard is taking on more in tasks in the house, like doing laundry and the grocery shopping for dinner, and generally becoming more independent. He enjoys his life and is currently focusing on his health. He is very comfortable in his neighbourhood and knows everybody in their townhouse complex. Barb and Richard have similar personalities and go to many social events. Richard doesn't like to stay out late, so often someone will offer him a ride home if Barb isn't ready to leave.

Barb and Richard are fun people to spend time with. Their life is like a social invitation and people just show up. Now, people who were friends with Heather and Barb have become Richard's friends, too. They have become Richard's relationships now and they make plans with each other independent of Heather and Barb.

Richard and Barb enjoy a great, interdependent life together and are pleased that Individualized Funding has allowed them to be creative in making it happen.



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Please mark your calendars for Vela's 2013 AGM on June 25, 7:00 at the Cameron Recreations Centre. Vela relies on Gaming revenue from the province and regulations require a high number of our membership to attend our AGM, so please join us. (We also love to see you!) We will be launching our new website at the AGM. With your membership with Vela, you will have access to many documents on our website to support you in your role as Microboard members and Agents of Individualized Funding. We are excited to share the changes and demonstrate how to navigate the new site.



Family Support Institute Award

We were honoured and proud to accept the "Celebration of Families" award from our sister organization, Family Support Institute at their annual Training Weekend in Naramata. This award acknowledges "Exemplary Support to Families" in the non-profit/organization category. As Linda Perry was recovering from surgery, Vela's Northern Facilitator, Terry Robertson, and board members Dave Paynter, Maria Glaze and Pat Tesan were on hand to accept the award.

I so enjoyed an early morning phone conversation with Denise Lawson and look forward to meeting in her and her family in person one day. It was inspiring to hear about the richness of her 24-year-old daughter's life and learn about the vast network of people that surround her.

Denise and her husband, Glenn, were living in a rural area in B.C.'s interior when they began accessing support for their young daughter, Katie. Living outside of town, they couldn't utilize established programs, but did have access to funding. Early on they began to interview and hire people to provide respite support for their daughter.

As Katie moved toward adulthood, Glenn and Denise couldn't envision supports or services that would work in their rural life. They lived on a small acreage 40 minutes away from the city. Accessing support for Katie was not easy because of the transportation issues. Their family began to consider relocation and finally settled on the Comox Valley. Glenn and Denise knew they wanted to build a life for Katie that included relationships that were natural, not pre-made. At CLBC's request, the family did look at existing



"Oh how I loved the beautiful waters of the Okanagan!" - Katie

options available for Katie, such as day programs. Nothing they saw reflected Katie's plans, hopes and dreams. They had done a PATH for Katie and attending a day program didn't fit with the dreams of the PATH or their family. While their goal was to build a community of people around Katie, they were new to the valley and didn't have a network of people to form a Microboard. They made the decision to continue with Individualized Funding (IF). Denise and Glenn knew IF was going to be a lot of work, but having had their own business all their lives, they knew they had the necessary skills. They were comfortable hiring people and managing the money.

Denise has always been very involved in advocacy work and community living and attended information events with people like Michael Kendrick. She follows the CLBC website to learn about what's new and changing. Along the way, Denise learned about Individualized Funding, Microboards, and Vela. Their family connected with Jeanette Holder, Vela's Island Facilitator, when they were first exploring the Comox Valley as a possible place to live.

Denise recognizes that managing IF was not an easy choice and not for everyone. The easiest choice might have been to simply support Katie to attend a Monday-through-Friday day program, with her at home in the evening, and accessing occasional respite so she and Glenn could have some time to themselves. But that was not the kind of life they envisioned for Katie or for themselves.

One of the goals Denise had from the beginning was to support her adult daughter to have a life independent from her mother and father. Denise has a background in nursing, and an experience working in community health many years ago had a profound impact on her. She learned of parents in their late 70s who had a daughter and son, both in their 40s, and both of these adult children had Down syndrome. The son and daughter had only lived with the



The Gala girls

mom and dad – that life was their entire world. When their parents died, the system had no way to help the brother and sister, who had lived together their whole lives, to stay together. They were placed into separate, unfamiliar living situations. Denise remembers being horrified. She saw the impact of not planning for the future for someone who is so dependent on family for their daily care. It stuck with her. As a family, they knew Katie would need other people in her life who could be there for her, who cared about her and were invested in her continuing to have a really good life. And it is natural for a 24 year-old woman to be involved with her own network of people. Even though they are a close family and Katie still lives with Glenn and Denise, from about 8:30 in the morning until 9:00 at night, she is doing her own thing. Katie has an amazing life. She doesn't just have paid people in her life; she has a strong network of people who are interested in her and enjoy her company.

One of the reasons Denise and Glenn moved to the Comox Valley was because of L'Arche. (For more information about L'Arche, please visit the L'Arche website:





<http://www.larche.ca>) Through a role Denise had with L'Arche Comox Valley, she was able to get to know the young men and women who live in a L'Arche home; these are people who want to spend time with people in a different way. Denise and Glenn have hired some of the young women who have moved on from living in the L'Arche home. They have also had many interviews through their call for people in the newspaper and Craigslist and feel that they have gotten really good at picking out excellent people. They always have a trial time when a new person will just work alongside Katie to make sure it's a fit for Katie and for the person. Katie needs to feel really comfortable with a person. It was very hard for Denise to have to tell a person, "I'm sorry, this isn't going to work." But she knows ultimately it's her responsibility to Katie to have the very best people working with her. Many of the young women who work with Katie have friends who also want to include Katie in activities. They become Katie's friends. They have also made many connections through their church. Katie recently had a birthday party and 50

people came – people who Katie considers friends.

Jeanette recently facilitated another PATH for Katie with her family and a network of people they call, "The PATH Group." This group includes people aged 21 to 80-something who know and love Katie. They are planning for a future transition for Katie to live in her own home. Denise and Glenn just purchased a property near them that they plan to develop for Katie.

Denise and Glenn have been using IF for about 5 years now. They are in the groove and are used to doing the required monthly reporting now. For Denise, the hardest pieces of IF are negotiating for the funding and the rules about how the dollars are spent. She and Glenn have experienced difficulty getting timely responses back from people as their contract was coming due. They have been down to a week to negotiate new budgets for service. There were times their funding actually lagged because a contract was not renewed in time. Until this year, funding has not met the real budget needs for an independent life for Katie. There is not recognition for the significant amount of unpaid administration done by the family. Denise and Glenn wondered about a succession plan if something happens to them. Who will take over things like making up a schedule for employees, overseeing employees, menu planning, Katie's communication system, her health care needs, designing and overseeing the overall program? It's a real job and Denise and Glenn have now delegated these responsibilities to someone on Kate's team, even though IF funding is not allocated for someone in this role.

Denise also shared that she can't recall a time someone from MCFD or CLBC suggested their family call the Family Support Institute or Vela as a resource for support. This may be because the family lived rurally when Katie was young. She hopes that has changed. Vela was there to

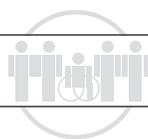
assist the family with Katie's plan and in putting together their budget together. Jeanette explained from the beginning that Vela's mandate includes assistance with Microboards AND Individualized Funding.

As our phone conversation came to end, I asked Denise if she had any final thoughts to share. I got goose bumps as she shared the following.

"I remember when Kate was about 10 years old, I felt swamped and isolated, I was home-schooling our children and living out in the country. I remember hearing somebody speak about the life they had for their adult daughter – how she was so connected to her community. It was a strong message of hope, and I thought, 'Yeah, right, for some people. But that is never going to be my story.' It IS my story now. And it's because of families who have walked before us who said, 'It IS possible.' That's what I want to get across to people. Even though it is a lot of work, Individualized Funding is the tool that has made it possible for Katie to have this most amazing life with the most incredible people in it."



*Our Okanagan extravaganza
in the summer of 2012*





Robert teasing his Mom, Lori, about her height

I've known Lori for several years, but not had the pleasure of meeting or spending time with her son, Robert. It was lovely to be invited to lunch at their home and hear their excitement, hopes and dreams as they prepare to use Individualized Funding.

Lori and Robert had been considering using Individualized Funding for several years. When they first thought of it, staff at CLBC cautioned Lori that it would be a lot of work and suggested they consider a Host Agency model. So, a few years ago when there was a new service provider in the community, Robert and Lori thought they'd try IF through a Host Agency. Over the past two years, it has proved challenging to have supports on a steady and consistent basis through that model. Consistency with people and times are critical for Robert to remain healthy. During our interview, Robert was comfortable speaking about having a mental illness. He had to be admitted to the hospital last September for a while after he experienced a breakdown. A psychiatrist who supports Robert said that having a dual diagnosis is very complicated. The mental illness plays off the cognitive disability, and without stability and consistency in Robert's life, he is likely to have a recurrence of another breakdown.

This past November, Robert and Lori made the decision to shift to IF. Their new contract was to start on April 1st, just a few days after our March interview. Through personal connections, Lori and Robert already interviewed and have 3 support workers lined up and ready to begin working with Robert. They are both excited about their new staff. They have found people who are willing to make Robert the priority, to think outside the box and make his life the best it can be. Robert said he now feels like he is the most important person in the process and he feels valued. While Robert is excited about new staff, he does miss the other people who supported him and hopes he can stay in touch. Robert and Lori already have plans for how the new team will spend time with Robert. They have plans for new employment

opportunities, going for walks, fishing, talking, making new friends and learning more about cooking and maintaining the home. After his admission to the hospital, Robert moved back home with his mother, but he really values his independence and wants to do his share of the household chores. He really hopes to move into a supported living arrangement down the road, but knows it could take time for the additional funding to make that possible. Robert is 32 years old and said that he doesn't want to live with his mother for the rest of his life. Lori has rheumatoid arthritis and has found it quite helpful to have Robert at home again. He's been a real help with some chores that she finds difficult, and after dinner, when she is most tired, Robert always does the dishes.

Robert enjoys his current work and hopes to continue working. He also hopes to stay involved with the Powell River Self Advocate group. He dreams of going on holidays to places like the Vancouver Aquarium. Robert really enjoyed going to a provincial B. C. Association for Community Living (now Inclusion B.C.) conference and would love to attend one again. Robert is also looking forward to an upcoming swim meet in Langley. He has won both national and provincial medals for swimming. Lori remembered the time Robert won the gold medal. She wasn't with him and he didn't say anything when they spoke on the phone. As soon as Robert saw Lori after the event, he surprised her by opening his coat and proudly showing off his medal!

Lori is very appreciative of the service-providing organizations in their community that Robert has been involved with. He continues to have a good relationship with the people, is invited to many social functions, and appreciates how supportive they have been.

Robert's biggest dream with IF is that people will put him as number one. He said in the past, it's been "world war 3" with his mom and service providers when things don't go well. He remembers having workers constantly changing over a period of 14 months, and he doesn't want that to happen again. He once had someone show up that he didn't even know – he called his mom right away. He needs to feel comfortable and secure with the people he spends time with. Lori has developed a great tool for Robert and those who support him to monitor his mental health on a daily basis, but if he doesn't trust the person he's with, he won't be open about what he is experiencing.

When asked if he had any fears about moving forward with IF, Robert said he was a bit worried that they might hire a predator. Lori reminded him about the Criminal Record searches they do on everyone. He seemed very confident and well spoken and when those observations were shared with him, Robert said he wasn't always like that. He said was picked on in elementary school and still remembers being that vulnerable. What an

important reminder from Robert about how negative past experiences can still affect how people think about things.

Lori said she is prepared for good and bad days as she starts out with this new model. She really wants this new way of doing things to be a team approach – not just parent-run. She hopes everyone involved will work together, learn from each other, and forgive each other for any mistakes along the way. And most importantly, she wants Robert’s life to be what he wants it to be, not just what she wants it to be. Lori does worry a bit about being isolated and hopes to connect with other families using Individualized Funding to support one another and share ideas.

Lori found the process starting IF to be a great deal of work. She described Vela and Linda Perry as a “Godsend.” Sometimes she e-mailed Linda daily as she was trying to figure things out. Linda walked her through the process, helping her with everything from getting a business license, putting together a budget, and creating job application and respite forms. She doesn’t think she could have gone the route of IF without Linda’s help. Lori described searching for and reading all the CLBC policies as very time-consuming and wishes she could have been given a package with everything she needed. She finds the system very fragmented and confusing with so many different CLBC staff to deal with.

Lori wants the best for her son and kept reminding herself of that when the process felt overwhelming. When she thinks of Robert, she feels ready to tackle anything that comes up!



Hello everyone, Since our last newsletter, the Community Relations committee has been hard at work building our fund development office; not literally,

of course; our Vela office remains intact as it was in December. I mean figuratively, as in the department that will begin to reach out into our communities, developing partnerships that will help support Vela to continue its work enriching lives and strengthening networks for people with disabilities and their families.

Kim Thomas has been studying our new database program, eTapestry. eTapestry will change the way Vela communicates activities and engages donors and members. This is very exciting, as the heightened efficiency will allow Vela to do more in building and keeping its member and donor base. We can’t do what we do without all of you!

On Vela’s wonderful new website, we have included information about how to become a member, how to donate, and what your donations allow us to do in community. With the new technologies, activities such as joining Vela or donating to us can be done electronically with little paper or energy use! Of course, good old-fashioned communication is always accessible too, like calling us directly or mailing us at our office. We will also have the opportunity to publicly thank everyone that supports us, from our volunteers to donors.

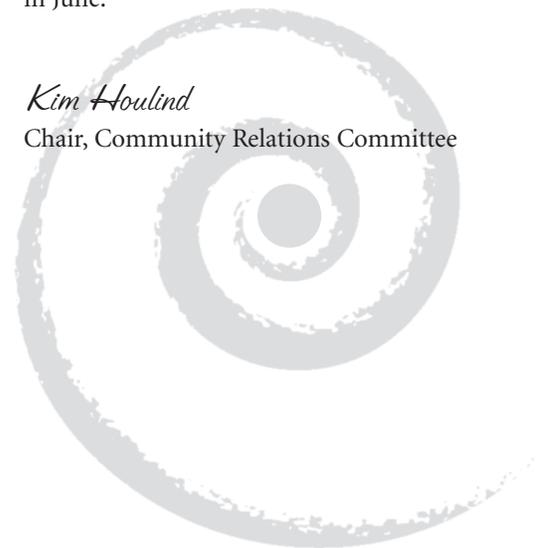
As we began to look at how Vela needed to change to accommodate our new direction with fund development, a report was released by Charity Intelligence announcing the top 100 Charities across Canada. Charity Intelligence monitors and assesses how charities spend donations and evaluate

the results of what these charities achieve. So these charities weren’t in the top 100 because they made the most money. They were in the top 100 because of their transparent and accountable fundraising practices, and because of how they used the donations received. Donors are giving not only to support causes but also to organizations that raise money efficiently and utilize the funding in impactful ways, and Vela wants to become that charity of choice. To learn more about Charity Intelligence or to read the report, visit www.charityintelligence.ca

In March, activist and fundraiser, Dan Pallotta, gave a presentation on TED Talks titled ‘The Way We Think About Charity is Dead Wrong’. He challenges us to consider why the organizations out there trying to solve our biggest community or societal issues have to do so much with so little. He states that the way we think about charity actually undermines what charities, such as Vela, are trying to do. Dan is very clear that the shift needed would allow charities to come to the economic development table so we can get what we need to do done! Interested in hearing more? Check it out at www.ted.com and search ‘Dan Pallotta’.

That’s it from us for the moment. We look forward to seeing you at the AGM in June.

Kim Houliind
Chair, Community Relations Committee



THANK YOU

Thank you to all our Funders & Donors
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*Did you know it has never
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If you would like to support Vela's work helping Microboards and other families committed to creating person centred, innovative supports just visit Vela's web site: **www.Microboard.org** and click the Donate Now button on the home page. Follow the instructions and it's done!

We would like to thank all of you that continue to assist us with your generous donations. Vela could not continue to provide assistance without your generous support.



We gratefully acknowledge the financial assistance of the Province of British Columbia

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I would like to make a donation to support the Vela Microboard Association:

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