



clements centre

Serving the Cowichan Region
since 1957

Connector

Spring, 2025



Clements Centre CEO, Dominic Rockall, with participants and staff from our new Seniors Program

A message from the CEO

In this issue of our newsletter, you will learn about the many projects we have been able to undertake because of your support of our "**Access.Ability.**" fundraising campaign this past winter.

Thanks to your generosity, meaningful improvements have already begun across our organization. We have built fully accessible bathrooms in two of our homes, installed accessible doors at our downtown location, and purchased new physiotherapy equipment that will make a big difference for many of the people we serve.

These upgrades are more than just physical changes. They are steps toward greater inclusion, dignity, and comfort for the individuals who rely on us every day. We truly could not have done this without you.

Over the past decade, the growth we have experienced at Clements Centre is remarkable. In 2014, we supported just over 800 individuals through our programs and services.

This past year, that number grew to almost 2,400. That is triple the number of people in just ten years. With this rising demand, your continued support is more crucial than ever. Thank you! But that's not all, there is even more happening. We are excited to share that Stanko-Caswell Place, our Cobble Hill location, is now home to a new after-school program for children and youth with developmental disabilities. This will provide a safe, engaging, and inclusive space where kids can thrive.

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**Hope.
Belonging.
Independence.**

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A message from the CEO (...continued)

We have also launched a seniors' program that runs Mondays through Fridays from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm. This offers social connection, recreation, and support for older adults in our community (many of whom can face isolation and limited access to services).

Looking ahead, we are thrilled to be working in partnership with The Parhar Group and BC Housing on the development of a 28-unit affordable housing apartment building. While this project is contingent on receiving funding from BC Housing, we are hopeful and excited about the possibility of providing more inclusive housing options for the people we support.

As I reflect on the season of growth we are experiencing at Clements Centre, I feel an overwhelming sense of pride—not just in what we have accomplished, but in who we are as an organization.

At the heart of our mission is a deep commitment to improving the quality of life for the people we serve. I am proud to lead a team that lives and breathes that mission every day. For me personally, what matters most in life is making sure the people around us—our family, our friends, and our wider community—are safe, supported, and have opportunities to thrive. When they are not okay, we step up, check in, and do what we can.

That belief is not just something I carry with me. It is something I see reflected throughout this organization. Whether it is our staff going the extra mile to support someone in crisis, our volunteers lending a helping hand, or our supporters showing up time and again to help us grow, I see that same shared value in action: the belief that we are all responsible for each other.

This spring, as we celebrate new programs, new partnerships, and growing momentum, I am most proud of the fact that we continue to centre our work on what really matters—community, connection, and care. Thank you for being a part of this journey. Together, we are building a stronger, more inclusive Cowichan.



Dominic Rockall
Chief Executive Officer



Tim Hortons.

Smile Cookie Week



Smile Cookie Week came to a close on May 4th, 2025. Our community showed incredible spirit and generosity.

The campaign was a great success thanks to strong support from the local residents, businesses, and volunteers who made it all possible. Last year, Smile Cookie Week raised an incredible \$10,290 for Clements Centre, and we are hopeful that this year's total will be just as sweet.

A heartfelt thank-you goes out to everyone who supported the campaign, and to Tim Hortons for once again choosing our organization as one of this year's Smile Cookie charity partners. Your community spirit touches lives.

If you wish to help support our continued growth,
please contact us today at 250.746.4135 or donations@clementscentre.org.

Your will power makes a difference

May is “Leave a Legacy Month” across Canada—a time when we are all reminded of the importance of creating or updating our wills. Approximately 5% of Canadians are currently planning to leave a part of their estate to a charity. Because the potential impact is so significant for the people we serve, we encourage all our supporters to consider leaving a gift in their will (called making a bequest).

Anyone can do it. You do not need to be wealthy to make a difference. In fact, most bequests in Canada are left by people of average means. Even if you have a family, you can prioritize their needs and then make a provision for a small, residual portion (a percentage) of your estate for your favourite charity.

This past year, three of our supporters have come forward to say they have named Clements Centre Society as a beneficiary in their will. Why?

“For my husband Darrel and I, it comes down to values,” says Leslie Welin, our Board Chair. “We believe strongly in the values for which Clements Centre stands, including equity, inclusion, accessibility, dignity, and respect. We want those values to continue beyond our lifetime. If others join us, it can go a long way toward ensuring a future in which all individuals in our community are included, valued, and celebrated.”

Thank you for leading by example, Leslie and Darrel. —  —



Leslie and Darrel Welin, legacy donors

To arrange a legacy gift to Clements Centre Society, we recommend you discuss it with your family and seek legal advice. To ensure we understand your intentions and can honour them appropriately, please contact Jonathan Dallison at jdallison@clementscentre.org or 250.746.4135. Legacy giving information can be viewed on the “make a donation” page of our website: clementscentre.org.



Donor profile: How Nancy Brennan found her peace in the valley




Nancy Brennan knows a good thing when she sees it—or hears about it.

“When I moved here to the Cowichan Valley in 2002, I met several individuals involved with Clements Centre and noticed how proud they all were about what they did at the centre,” she says. “I was curious and, in the end, discovered a wonderful community that accepts all people as equal, takes them under their wing, and lets them be themselves, but the best version of themselves they can be.”

“This contrasted with when I grew up in Nova Scotia,” she continues. “People with developmental disabilities were ostracized. They need to be accepted as people, though. They need advocates.”

“I wanted to get involved, so I volunteered in The Mindful Mouthful’s kitchen and found it fun and inspiring to be part of a social enterprise that employs people with developmental disabilities and does it very successfully. I also volunteered as a greeter during the height of the pandemic.”

“I loved being hands on and witnessing people be empowered every day.” She smiles and adds, “There was so much love. It was like being part of a family. When my husband Dwayne passed away, they said ‘we are sorry he died, but don’t worry because you still have us.’ I mean, how can you not be affected by that? They showed me you can get over things and still move along and get up every day and smile.”

Because of her first-hand experience seeing the importance of the work Clements Centre does, Nancy has also become a loyal donor every year for many years now. “Honestly,” she says, “I wish I could do more. I wish I could offer housing, but what I can do is include Clements Centre Society in my will. Anyone can do it in a way that suits their family and their finances. It can be a very simple process actually, and a lasting way to continue to impact people’s lives. I hope others will join me in considering a bequest to Clements. I feel strongly that, at the end of the day, this is where the greatest good can be done. We just need to band together.” —  —



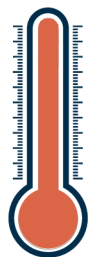
Nancy Brennan, donor and volunteer

**If you feel inspired to join Nancy by contributing to our work,
please contact us today at 250.746.4135 or donations@clementscentre.org.**

Donor impact: removing accessibility barriers

In recent months, through our “**Access.Ability.**” fundraising campaign, we asked for your help to make our programs and buildings more accessible to the people we serve. You responded in a way that shows how much you care. We received more than \$63,000 from members of our community who responded to our autumn mail campaign with personal donations. Wow! Thank you for this incredible generosity. Combined with grant support we received, we raised more than **\$113,000** to invest in projects that will have a significant impact.

Thanks
to you



we beat
our goal

An exciting development immediately enabled by your donations and by in-kind support from Community Living BC is the purchase of a wheelchair-accessible vehicle for our Campbell residence. This was our one remaining staffed home without an appropriate vehicle. Now, regardless of ability, our residents can go to appointments, visit friends and family, and take part in community. This literally changes lives. But that is not all: there are several other critical projects which have already been accomplished thanks to you.

Next Step, a Clements Centre program that supports individuals one-on-one to pursue their goals and dreams, moved locations in December. The program's new home required some significant upgrades.

Originally, the building had two tiny, awkward bathrooms, and the main entrance required individuals to climb several stairs. You enabled us to renovate one of the bathrooms to make it fully accessible and also install a ramp at the front entrance, providing a universally accessible entrance to this important program.

While your support has already gone far, it will go even further. We have met with contractors and are scheduling the installation of automatic doors at the entrance to our Supported Employment and Supported Independent Living programs. Soon, the necessary mechanisms will be installed, and access to this building for participants, job seekers, and all community members will be barrier-free. In addition, we have met with elevator specialists and are reviewing estimates for our upper-floor housing units that, until now, have been accessible only by stairs. We cannot wait to be able to transform our upper units into homes that, in the future, can be welcoming and accessible for all, including those with mobility needs.

As an organization committed to inclusion, we are incredibly grateful for the support you have provided for these projects. Touching lives in such a practical way—a way that will be felt every day for years to come—is an incredible gift for you to have given. Just in time for “National Access Ability Week” (May 25th to 31st), please accept our heartfelt thanks for all you do. Our core funding does not cover everything we need to do to help the people we serve. It is YOU who makes the difference. Thank you! —C—



Our new wheelchair accessible van



Zoe Dalton, Chief Operating Officer, standing in front of the newly built ramp at our Next Step location

If you want to help us continue to improve accessibility to our programs and buildings, please contact us today at 250.746.4135 or donations@clementscentre.org.

Sponsorship profile: When a walk-in freezer is a game changer



Alex Brocklebank and Kendall Gross of Island Savings tour the new walk-in freezer alongside Zoe Dalton, Clements Centre's Chief Operating Officer; Jackie Dejong, Kitchen Manager; and bakers Arianna and Tawny

Big things are happening behind the scenes at The Mindful Mouthful, our social enterprise bakery that creates inclusive employment opportunities for adults with developmental disabilities. Thanks to a generous investment from Island Savings, we have been able to install a new walk-in freezer, and it is already making a massive difference.



"The new walk-in freezer is a game changer," agrees Jackie Dejong, Kitchen Manager at The Mindful Mouthful. "We can produce so much more now."

Previously, limited freezer space meant staff were constantly juggling ingredients, carefully restricting batch sizes, and turning down

opportunities to expand. Now, the team has the cold-storage capacity to dream bigger, experiment with new recipes, ramp up production, and streamline operations.

There is also a sustainability win here. The new walk-in freezer unit is far more energy efficient than the patchwork of small freezers it replaces, lowering our hydro bill and our environmental footprint.

"This initiative aligns with our commitment to community and sustainable development goals," says Kendall Gross, President of Island Savings, a division of First West Credit Union. "We are proud to support projects that create opportunity and contribute to long-term resilience."

That is exactly what this freezer makes possible. More storage means more delicious baked goods and more capacity to meet growing demand. For example, we are now able to stock Mindful Mouthful cookies at Country Grocer in Duncan. This marks a big step toward increasing our sales, expanding our community connections, and providing continued employment opportunities.



Heartfelt gratitude to Island Savings for investing in us



Country Grocer®

Did you know you can now buy Mindful Mouthful cookies at Country Grocer in Duncan?

Island Savings' contribution demonstrates a deep commitment to our community. We are incredibly grateful for their continued support and for helping us achieve our mission. —C—

IslandSavings

A DIVISION OF FIRST WEST CREDIT UNION

Hungry to support? Look for The Mindful Mouthful treats at local retailers, or visit themindfulmouthful.ca to learn more.

Adult community living: taking the “Next Step” to a new location



Participants of Next Step enjoy music in their new location

For the past three years, Clements Centre has been looking for an appropriate building in which to operate Next Step, one of our Community Inclusion programs. When the search began, Next Step

was squeezed into just one half of a shared space. This significantly impacted how many people could comfortably be served in that location.

When the lease for that space ended, we identified a temporary alternative by using the “kin hut,” a converted double garage, which had been upgraded to include a bathroom, kitchen, and new flooring through the generous support of the Kinsmen Club. While this was a stable, temporary solution (in that we owned the property), it still fell short of the size and layout that would be ideal to serve the people who attended.

In December of 2024, we completed the purchase of the Agricultural Society’s building (located on Clements Street just across the parking lot from our main building). Through this acquisition, Next Step has been able to expand from previously providing Community

Inclusion support for two individuals to now serving seven individuals with additional space for two more. We have welcomed five new participants, five additional staff, and a new Program Coordinator, enriching the program.

Participants are engaging in more community-based activities such as equine therapy, swimming, bowling, and art just to name a few. A number of participants created art for our recent Clements Centre Art Exhibition hosted by the Cowichan Valley Arts Council, and many individuals also had their art pieces purchased. They have also started a monthly hot lunch program in which participants come up with a menu idea, shop for supplies, and help to cook the final product.

Through collaboration, consultation, and creativity, the Next Step program has tailored what their program offers in order to meet the needs, interests, and desires of the people for whom—and with whom—they work. This new and exciting chapter for Next Step is full of possibilities in a place where all people are included, valued, and celebrated. —C—

Make it monthly



Becoming a monthly donor is convenient, flexible, and can lead to a greater impact on the people we serve. It also lowers our administrative costs and provides us with a reliable source of funding. You get one consolidated tax receipt for the year which makes it both donor friendly and environmentally friendly. Plus, you can cancel or adjust your contribution at any time.

Monthly giving programs have become increasingly popular among charities. One of the more compelling reasons is that it is easier to have a more significant

impact. For example, while a one-time gift of \$100 is very much appreciated, a monthly commitment of just \$15 adds up to \$150 over the course of the year, allowing donors to contribute more than they might otherwise feel comfortable giving in a single transaction.

Donna Hobson, a monthly donor to Clements Centre says, "We donate monthly because Clements Centre enriches our community. In a skilled, kind, and supportive environment participants learn life skills, independence, inclusiveness, and the pure joy of play. Clements supports our community, and we support Clements, it is a worthy cause indeed."

If you would like to learn how you can “make it monthly,” please contact us at 250.746.4135 or donations@clementscentre.org.

Child development: rising to a new challenge




The term “accessibility” often suggests physical accessibility. We think of ramps, elevators, automatic doors, and adapted vehicles. However, a primary component of having a person’s physical environment meet their accessibility needs is the ability to communicate.

Our team of Speech and Language Pathologists (SLPs) works with young children who do not have the ability to verbalize (some may never develop that skill). We have an important project in which iPads essentially replace spoken language for a child, enabling them to express their wants and needs, and helping them build relationships with their peers—a vital component of development.

In our work, we see every day how essential the right tools are. The iPads have been a lifeline for many families we support. Unfortunately, we have several iPads in the program which are outdated and cannot run current AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication) apps like SpeakEasy. That is a big problem because we have a growing waitlist of families who want to borrow an iPad to try AAC with their child.

Before families can apply for their own iPad through the “Bear Essentials” program (which helps families by providing financial support for specialized equipment for children with medical needs or disabilities), they need to complete a three-month trial that must be supervised by a Speech-Language Pathologist who confirms the child’s need. If we do not have enough iPads, families cannot even begin that process.

One of the ways we are trying to meet this need is by offering AAC group-training sessions for parents. This gives families a chance to try the apps in a supportive environment and meet the Bear Essentials requirement. We need more iPads to do it. Also, equipping each SLP with a dedicated iPad would increase our efficiency. It would allow us to model AAC strategies on the spot in real time and better support families during their visits.

We ask for your help to give children the tools they need to communicate, connect, and thrive. This June, will you please contribute to us online at clementscentre.org? Your gift will directly impact a child’s life. Right now, our families really need this support. Thank you for anything you can do to help us financially to meet this need. Our core funding simply does not cover everything we need to do for the people we serve. But you can make that difference. –  –

Your fundraising team is here to connect great people with a great cause.

Please reach out to any of us if you would like to support the work Clements Centre does.

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*Thank
you!*