

# connector

News from Clements Centre

## Baking up a bright future at The Mindful Mouthful

For over a decade, The Mindful Mouthful, our inspiring social enterprise (a business with social purpose), has had a great story to tell, producing artisanal baked goods for sale and providing rich and meaningful employment opportunities for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

However, infrastructure and distribution challenges have consistently limited our opportunities for growth. We could not significantly expand production because we were missing some key equipment and lacked an affordable means of delivering products to a broader market. These factors led to some financial strain.



*Some of the team behind every delicious bite at The Mindful Mouthful.*

Those familiar with us know that we have always refused to compromise on quality or care. With those values in mind, we looked at our social enterprise and decided it was time to figure out how to expand so we could thrive. Major equipment purchases were prohibitively expensive, and developing a distribution network seemed beyond our capacity as a small operation.

As usual, life's biggest challenges are best solved by helping one another. This is where Island Savings and Country Grocer, our incredible partners, came in.

Island Savings, a division of Tru Cooperative Bank, invested in The Mindful Mouthful so we could acquire two key pieces of equipment: first, an industrial-grade, walk-in freezer (last year), providing us with the space needed to store additional product, and then an automated cookie depositor (this year), enabling us to increase production, while reducing strain on our bakers' hands and wrists. This latest support from Island Savings' Community Impact Partnership program also enabled us to hire a business intern to help optimize key functions. Thanks to Island Savings' forward-thinking support of our social enterprise, we have been able to overcome major hurdles.

The remaining obstacle was getting our product to a broader market. Thanks to an incredible partnership with Country Grocer—a relationship that has blossomed over the past year—we were able to build on our foundation of selling to our wonderful local farm markets by selling our baked goods at one, then two, then four, then seven Country Grocer locations. The company now provides us with free distribution to all of their Island locations, from Cobble Hill through Nanaimo, and they send 100% of the proceeds back to The Mindful Mouthful. Fantastic!

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## Behind the partnerships



*Island Savings and The Mindful Mouthful: true partners in success.*

### IslandSavings

"At Island Savings, we believe meaningful work is foundational to strong, inclusive communities. The Mindful Mouthful embodies this belief by creating employment opportunities that empower individuals, build skills, and foster independence. We are proud to partner with Clements Centre to support a social enterprise that is making a tangible difference in people's lives."

Kendall Gross, President, Island Savings



*Introducing The Mindful Mouthful to Country Grocer shoppers.*



"Country Grocer is proud to get behind a great (and delicious) cause. Supporting a local charitable organization such as Clements Centre aligns perfectly with our values, and it is something our customers can feel good about with every purchase. We are excited to continue to share The Mindful Mouthful's story with our customers and support the great work being done right here in the Cowichan Region."

Dustan McKie, Ladysmith Store Manager

## News update from our CEO



Greetings from Clements Centre. Some of you may have seen the news lately about the BC government's decision to suspend the Community Housing Fund (CHF). The CHF has been a vital program since 2018.

It is a \$3.3 billion commitment to build over 20,000 affordable rental homes across the province. When Budget 2026 was released in February, the fund's latest intake was cancelled. This left Clements Centre and many other organizations with no funding to proceed on projects that already had hundreds of thousands invested in affordable housing developments.

For the people we serve who live on a fixed disability income, housing is not affordable and there are very few options. Since the announcement, Clements Centre's Board and staff have been advocating for a reversal of this decision. We will keep pushing and looking for solutions because the people we support need and deserve a place to call home.

### ...The Mindful Mouthful

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Island Savings and Country Grocer embody the true meaning of partnership, and we could not be more grateful for their community spirit and vital financial support. Their help, combined with the talent and efforts of our baking team, and the loyalty of our customers, will ensure the future is exciting for The Mindful Mouthful. The sky is the limit, and that sky is now in clear view. –🌍–

This Spring, there is some genuinely good news to share, though. We are really pleased about the Province of BC's \$475 million investment in Children and Youth with Support Needs services through the Ministry of Children and Family Development. Many parents and service providers have welcomed this—it promises to open doors to services that were not open before for many children. While this is good news for many families, we also want to acknowledge that some families of children with Autism have concerns about how the changes to funding will affect them. The current system of Autism services funding is changing, and it is not entirely clear what some families will receive after the change. Our hope is that, when the details are clear, we will find that BC children and families will be better served overall.

Closer to home, we are also thrilled to share that, this April, Clements Centre launched a new youth employment program in a collaboration with School District 79. This exciting initiative is focused on helping older teens take meaningful steps toward employment after high school.

As always, Clements Centre is grateful for the incredible support of our community. None of the work we do would be possible without you.



Dominic Rockall, CEO

## Why we donate monthly



"We are monthly donors because we truly see the difference the programs make in the lives of families and individuals. We have a family member with twins, both of whom have Down syndrome. Although they do not live here,

we have seen firsthand how meaningful support can be for children and families facing extra challenges. We have also seen the important role Clements Centre plays locally, and we hope our monthly contribution helps ensure these programs and services continue to support the families who need them."

Melissa and Rob Windsor, monthly donors

## Meet Jessica

Jessica has been part of Clements Centre for over 17 years, and that connection continues to play an important role in her life today. She currently attends our Adult Living program and works at The Mindful Mouthful.

Like everyone, Jessica has goals for her future. One of the most important for her is to continue living with her husband and their caregiver (with whom they have a lot of fun while also creating a stable and supportive home in which they can grow). When asked what makes her marriage strong, she said, "Being honest with each other, being nice to each other, and spending time together."



At Clements Centre, Jessica has found a place where she feels valued and included. Her work at The Mindful Mouthful is especially important to her. She takes pride in helping Jackie, the Kitchen Manager, and her co-workers, and enjoys earning her own money. Of everything she does there, making cookies is her favourite.

Stories like Jessica's do not happen by chance. They are made possible by a community that believes in inclusion and invests in the right supports. When you donate, you are helping create opportunities for people to build healthy relationships, find meaningful work, and live fulfilling, independent lives. Thank you for touching lives.

## be a G.E.M. give every month




To join our G.E.M. group of donors please contact Leah Hokanson at [lhokanson@clementscentre.org](mailto:lhokanson@clementscentre.org) or 250.746.4135 ext. 231

## Donor impact

This past autumn, our community rallied behind our **“Your support. Their potential.”** grassroots fundraising campaign, contributing just under \$90,000 toward our provision of children’s therapies, including physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and speech language therapy.

“I feel privileged and honoured to work in and for a community that cares for children and youth,” says Kayla Clarke, Program Director, Child Development Team. “Thanks to the generosity you all showed during our campaign, we were able to increase our therapy supports for early intervention. With more than 300 Cowichan Region children waitlisted for our services, this is extremely helpful.”

When the expenses of prep work, travel, and follow-up work are all included with the appointments themselves, this fundraised amount translates into more than 460 therapy sessions for kids. Because these therapies have the biggest impact during the pre-school years, this support was timely. The community’s response was unprecedented for our charity.

“We are fortunate to receive funding from the Province of BC to provide these services, but it is not enough to meet the ever-increasing need,” Kayla continues, “and I am proud of our community for seeing the value in the services we provide. The impact has been felt immediately. For example, with your donations, we have been able to increase our speech language therapy hours, meaning more children and families are able to access this critical help.” -  -



*“We are all grateful to everyone who got behind our autumn campaign. Thank you!”*

*Kayla Clarke, Program Director,  
Child Development Team*

## Impact in action

Here are two recent quotes from parents whose children are receiving early intervention therapies, benefitting from visual aids and augmentative and alternative communications tools that your donations have made possible:



“Thank you for the detailed report as well as the routine visuals. I put them on the craft dresser in our kitchen as soon as we got home yesterday. I was planning on just having it there for the weekend to get my daughter used to them. She said right away, “Are these mine? I love them! I love them!” She then kissed them and listed off what each one was for. This morning she said “My jobs,” when she saw them, and peeled off a couple. I’m excited there is buy in. This is going to make things much easier.”



“My eyes actually teared up watching my son colour because he was really doing it. I had never seen him draw shapes or a person before, so it was quite heartwarming. Thank you for everything you have done for our family. It has truly been life changing. We are extremely grateful to have this support on our journey.”

## Our event panel



Spencer Schmidt

“Estate planning is one of the most meaningful ways we can care for our families and strengthen our community,” says Spencer Schmidt, Managing Lawyer at Stonebridge Law in Duncan. “Clements Centre has always embodied those same values. I am grateful for the chance to help people make thoughtful decisions about the legacy they want to leave and make the planning process a little easier.”



Cara Light



Sean Murray

Our panel of experts will include Cara Light and Sean Murray, accountants with MNP, a national, client-focused firm, providing accounting, consulting, tax, and digital services in 150 communities from coast to coast, including right here in the Cowichan Region.

## Come to a free estate planning event

**When:** May 13th, 2:30 PM

**Where:** Clements Centre’s main building at 5856 Clements St, Duncan

**Who is invited:** You!

**Info:** Jonathan Dallison 250.746.4135 or [jdallison@clementscentre.org](mailto:jdallison@clementscentre.org)

This expert-led session is open to everyone and will walk participants through the key building blocks of an effective estate plan, including wills, powers of attorney, representation agreements, and strategies for incorporating charitable gifts into both inter vivos (during lifetime) and testamentary (through your will or estate) giving. We will also highlight the tax benefits available under Canadian law for charitable donations made while alive or through an estate and how thoughtful planning can maximize the impact of those gifts for both your chosen charities and your family.

Whether you already have a comprehensive estate plan, documents that are outdated, or have never made a will before, this session will offer clear, practical guidance. Our goal is to make estate planning approachable, to answer common questions, and to help attendees understand how a well-structured plan can reflect their values and support the people and causes that matter most.



## Creating your legacy of love

Do you have an up-to-date will? According to the Angus Reid pollsters, less than 50% of Canadians have a last will and testament even though 91% believe wills are important. Procrastination and a belief that they are too young or lack sufficient assets often prevent people from creating one. Ultimately, this inaction can create stress for loved ones and result in provincial laws determining a dispersal of assets that may not align with the deceased’s wishes.

Currently, less than 10% of Canadians reflect the values they had in life by including a charitable gift in their will (although that number has been growing in recent years). May is “Leave a Legacy Month” across Canada. This is a national campaign encouraging people to create a lasting impact by including charitable gifts in their wills (bequests). It highlights that legacy giving is not just for the wealthy—anybody can do it. Bequests offer donors benefits like reduced estate taxes while also affording them the opportunity to support meaningful causes for future generations. It is an effective and smart-money way for people to share their values beyond their lifespan.

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## Our mission at work

Seen here are just a few of the many outings the people we serve get to enjoy because of our fleet of vehicles. It is all an important part of our charity's vision: a community in which everyone is included, valued, and celebrated. Being able to get to medical and dental appointments, family visits, interviews, and anything else anyone needs to get to as a part of daily life is vital. Our vehicles make all of it possible and they make a big difference in people's lives every day.



## Legacy of love

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At Clements Centre, we have a handful of individuals who have recently joined our "Legacy of Love." This is a group of donors who have all included a gift to our charity in their will. We thank them for demonstrating their values in this meaningful and impactful way. If this is something you are considering, please talk with your family first so they understand your wishes. Next, consult your legal/financial advisor, and contact Jonathan Dallison, our Director of Development at 250.746.4135 (ext. 222) to ensure your intentions are clearly understood, to be certain you have all the information from us that you need, and so you can join our Legacy of Love group. Our heartfelt thanks go to everyone who joins this movement of people whose love is bigger than life itself. —

## Donor profile: maximizing your donation



"In 2025, my financial advisor informed me of the benefits of donating securities instead of cash," says longtime supporter Wendy Zeer. "Donating mutual funds or stocks not only provides a valuable gift to a charity but also allows the investor to receive a larger tax savings through the reduction of capital gains."

As a retired employee of Clements Centre, I know how valuable their services are to the community and the people they support. I know that my donation will go a long way toward making a difference to people's lives."

Wendy Zeer, donor

## Vans, vandalism, and our mission

There is more to Clements Centre's fleet of 18 vehicles than meets the eye. In many cases, our fleet offers those we serve some of the only opportunities they have for community inclusion beyond the confines of their own neighbourhood. Many of the individuals we support do not have driver's licenses; bussing in our community is limited; ride-sharing is non-existent, and walking can only get one so far. For that matter, not everyone is able to walk.

Life experiences that many of us take for granted are simply not accessible to everyone.

Viewing exhibits at the Royal BC Museum, enjoying a picnic by the Gorge with friends and contacts from other

communities, experiencing the beauty of the ocean, travelling to a campsite for an annual get-together, hiking on trails throughout our magnificent region, getting to medical appointments, getting to job interviews: our fleet allows for all of this, and more. Our program vehicles are central to our mission, enabling us to support adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities as they reach for their goals and strive to make their dreams a reality.

Our vehicle fleet is something we cherish at Clements Centre. However, many of our vehicles are aging, and keeping them in good repair and road-safe condition is very costly. Over the past two years, we have paid an average of \$88,661.88 per year just to keep our fleet on the road. This includes a repair and maintenance cost alone for our aging fleet of \$27,804.69 a year, annual insurance costs of \$25,125, and gas costs of \$35,732.19 (an amount that is once again on the rise). This is significantly more than we receive from our core service contract funding.

Recently, times have gotten even tougher: one of our program vehicles was badly damaged as a result of vandalism. The van will be out of commission for an undetermined amount of time, putting added pressure on our other vehicles, and resulting in fewer chances for individuals to experience community inclusion on a broader scale.



We do our best to flex the use of program vehicles wherever possible, but each vehicle in our fleet is already heavily relied upon each day.

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## The Drive for a Drive

Getting to appointments, seeing family, participating in community events, hiking and getting outdoor exercise, getting to interviews: these are just some of the daily activities our vehicles make accessible to the people we serve. In fact, our vehicles are absolutely central to our mission.

The reality is, though, that our vehicles are incredibly costly not only to acquire, but also to maintain, repair, fuel, and insure. The average annual costs for these latter three expenses alone are almost \$89,000. We are also in the position of needing to acquire new accessible vehicles to replace aging ones that are near their end of life and require significant maintenance costs. For context, consider that the cost of an accessible van can be in the neighbourhood \$140,000.

These costs vastly exceed the funding available from our government service contracts. Unfortunately, we have no reliable source of funding. We need help from our community. Please watch your mailbox / inbox for our spring campaign "The Drive for a Drive." We would appreciate any help you can give.



## Vans, vandalism, and our mission

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Keeping our vehicles road safe and ready to do their job comes with a hefty price tag. Add vandalism to the mix, and we are left with a very financially challenging situation. With the already high expense of maintaining our vehicles, we are unable to dedicate the funds we would like to ensuring that our vehicles remain reputable looking. When a swastika was scratched into the side of one of our vans last summer, we covered the damage with a sticker. When license plates were torn off of two of our vehicles, we spent hours in communication with the RCMP and at the local ICBC office getting the vans new plates so they could be back on the road as soon as possible. The rear bumper of one of our vans was kicked in not long ago, leaving it dented and vulnerable to rust.



*"We really need the community's support to help us afford the vehicles and maintenance that make community inclusion and accessibility possible for the people we serve.*

*My heartfelt thanks go out to everyone who supports our 'Drive for a Drive' campaign."*

*Zoe Dalton, Chief Operating Officer*

As our vehicles age and require increasing maintenance, and as we grapple with serious damage caused by vandalism, we are faced with an inescapable truth: maintaining our fleet is one of our most perplexing problems. We are grateful for the support of our core funders. However, given that the costs of providing life-changing community inclusion opportunities exceed what we receive, we find ourselves in need of additional help to ensure that our fleet can continue providing a strong basis for the rich and transformational experiences that so many of us are fortunate enough to take for granted. -🌍-

## Upcoming events:

### Preemie group

**When:** April 30<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 AM

**Where:** Playgroup Room,  
5814 Banks Road

**Theme:** Mothers' mental health

**Cost:** Free

**Contact:** [idp@clementscentre.org](mailto:idp@clementscentre.org)

### Infant massage

**When:** Thursdays, at 1:00 PM,  
May 7<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup>,  
and June 4<sup>th</sup>

**Where:** Playgroup Room,  
5814 Banks Road

**Cost:** \$20.00

**Contact:** [idp@clementscentre.org](mailto:idp@clementscentre.org)

### Estate planning event

**When:** May 13<sup>th</sup> at 2:30 PM

**Where:** 5856 Clements Street

**Cost:** Free

**Contact:** Jonathan Dallison at  
[jdallison@clementscentre.org](mailto:jdallison@clementscentre.org)  
or 250.746.4135 ext. 222

## Thank you to this issue's extra contributors:

Kayla Clarke  
Zoe Dalton  
Dominic Rockall  
Spencer Schmidt

**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!