

Celebrating staff at NHCIA



By Kristena Schutt-Moore

The theme of the first in-person annual general meeting two years for North Hastings Community Integration Association was staff recognition. On Friday, Oct. 28 the staff and self advocates of NHCIA gathered at the Bancroft Curling Club to discuss the success of the past years and the challenges they have overcome, as well as enjoy a dinner together.

The staff were presented with awards for the years of service. Awarded with five years' plaques were Allison Obradovich, Bev Lloyd, Shaely Coulas. The 10 years of service plaque was Teena Surma, 20 years was presented to Liza Emery and 35 years was presented to Emma Woodcox.

During the AGM meeting the board of directors were voted in and remained the same. These members included Lloyd Churchill, Janice Stapley, Barb Millar, Stacey Baker, Don Taylor and Brenda Locke. Those interested in joining the board or volunteering are asked to contact NHCIA executive director Sandy Phillips at 613-332-2090.

As the president of the board Stapley gave her report saying that during the 2021 to 2022 they used a hybrid model for meeting due to the COVID-19 pandemic. And despite the confusion and difficulties the pandemic caused NHCIA still managed to get projects done, though slowly. This includes the housing project at 36 Chemaushgon Road. The partnership with Springale continues and the hope is that the seven unit housing development will be completed and that they will have occupancy by the end of the year. However this has not been confirmed.

During the pandemic the board also took a closer look at initiatives regarding positive mental health in the workplace and the well-being of the self advocates and employees of NHCIA. This included assistance with funding for unexpected finances the families of self advocates experienced for items such as medical, transportation and items of necessity.

Unfortunately, the NHCIA's Strategic Plan was not finished as COVID-19 made it difficult to work on any of the plans' initiatives. The board has approved an extension of three years on the plan.

One of the new projects that the NHCIA board is excited to see being brought forward is the Refill Station on Station Street. This social enterprise project has three main initiatives including providing employment for self advocates, reducing landfill waste and providing eco friendly products to the community. This initiative will replace the Dimples Mini Putt that the board closed last year.

Refill Station on Station will be a store located in the Bancroft legion building behind the Bancroft Fitness Gym. The store will

provide green based products including hand soap, tooth paste, laundry soap and more for personal care and house cleaning products. The Refill Station will be opening in November.

During her executive director's report Phillips said that while COVID-19 delayed and hindered some of the strategic plan initiatives they were able to continue to work on several aspects of the plan. They also started a partnership with Integrated Coordinated Access Hastings County that focused on housing and homelessness within the county. NHCIA also participated in Enumeration for Homeless people in November.

In the supported living report, managers of Independent Living Teena Surma and Mrittany McCaig said that the past year had been busy and full of changes. For many years, the Supported Independent Living program at HNCIA has supported 19 individuals to live, work and participate in the community. However, over the past year there were several changes to the way people were supported and some people moved away, some relocated to the bancroft area, and had to increase or decrease their support needs. At the end of the fiscal year, NHCIA was supporting two new individuals. Three service spaces were also used to support an individual in crisis.

The NHCIA submitted budgets to the Ministry of Health to create two new support spaces for young adults from the Bancroft area for the Transitional Aged Youth Program. TAG is a program for young adults with developmental disabilities supported by the Children's Aid Society who are transitioning into adult services. NHCIA worked with the individuals to create a plan for their support needs and the ministry to create a budget. At the end of the fiscal year the SIL program had servies spaces for a total of 21 individuals.

The individuals in the Supported Living Program receive a variety of supports based on their needs. The level and types of support determines the amount of hours they receive per week. Supports include activities of daily living, employment, leisure, housing support, establishing natural connections, and working towards goals. Some of the goals NHCIA was able to help individuals achieve this year were learning to ride the Go-train, learning cooking skills, obtaining more independence with paying bills and connecting with family.

It was also a busy year for the finance department. Finance coordinator Samantha Tomasini reported that NHCIA had a successful in-person audit after two years of having to report and have the audit done online due to the pandemic.

The NHCIA spent \$2.5 million in operational funding. However they came out of the fiscal year with a small surplus that was payable to the ministry and a small surplus of \$20,500 in the Adult Respite and Out of Home Respite Programs due to the pandemic that the ministry gave a one time permission to care over the funds into the current fiscal year of 2022-2023.