

## History of Community Living

Community Living was formed over 50 years ago by groups of dedicated parents who saw the need to band together to provide community support services to their children and future generations.

Parents and family members continue to be the backbone and the strength of our movement. They continue to serve as members of the Board, on Committees and as much needed volunteers.

Our success has been based on the hopes, dreams and necessities of people who live with an intellectual disability.

Those first dedicated parents dared to challenge the norms of post-war North America. They broke with social dictates that cloaked people with disabilities, and their families, in a shroud of secrecy, shame and sickness. These parents chose not to send their sons and daughters to "hospitals", better known today as institutions. They dealt with a storm of contrary opinion, professional and otherwise, at a time in history when it was considered imperative to care for people with disabilities as a chronic medical problem. Their resolve not to place a child in government facilities or bring them home was considered mistreatment. Early on these parents learned the power of mutual support and networking. The founding parents and friends of the association sponsored, in partnership with the government, an array of opportunities in the community. Fund-raising and affiliation with community clubs and organizations also helped provide a number of services to families and individuals. Collaboration at the community, provincial and federal levels have had significant impact on law, legislation and the development of funding and other forms of support.

We envision a society where all people are included in the community and valued for their participation. The inclusion of people with disabilities enriches all of our lives and their contributions are important to the success of our communities. The attainment of our goals depends on our ability to respond to each person as a unique individual with all the rights, privileges and responsibilities of citizenship, while assisting communities to include and value people, remove barriers to participation and be accepting of differences.

The hopes and dreams of families and people with intellectual disabilities will always necessitate positive action. It is important to continue the work undertaken by our predecessors to integrate and include all people into community life: Community Living is committed to that end.

Community Living Upper Ottawa Valley was incorporated as a charitable non-profit Ontario corporation in 1958. The Association was established by families who wanted their children with intellectual disabilities to have opportunities to learn. They established local schools, and as their children grew to adulthood they helped create activity centre's, a sheltered workshop, group homes, apartment programs, family support, child development centre's, supported living and supported employment. In the past ten years Community Living has focused on creating individualized services and funding within its operations.

Community Living Upper Ottawa Valley works predominately with 150 adults who have an intellectual disability and their families in the context of community living. We actively facilitate and support relationships between people in all possible roles and interactions in the community. The people we support have varied community interests and activities.

People with disabilities are found in all cultures, and speak all languages. Our community is designated under the French Language Services Act. Our organization is not a designated agency, however we employ a number of bilingual staff and support francophone Ontarians.

Every person is affected by disability in some way or another. Participation in our organization is based on a commitment to people with intellectual disabilities. People with disabilities are most often poor and face many barriers to inclusion. Our organization's role focuses on helping these individuals.

Working towards a better community life for those most vulnerable enhances everyone's life in our communities. This work helps break down intolerance, poverty, isolation and other forms of marginalization, while promoting understanding, tolerance, inclusion and a better standard of living.