

December
2025

VIEWS



Celebrating Holidays around the World

Message from the Board of Directors

This year, at our Annual General Meeting, I was reminded of the importance of coming together and taking time to talk with one another. We caught up with old friends and made new ones over dinner. We heard from self-advocates who spoke about independence, belonging, and opportunity. We watched a wonderful video from our Children's Services, listening to children sing and share their experiences — and it filled the room with joy!

Over the past year, Aspire staff have shared ideas and made plans that help us respond more effectively to the people we serve, enhance our programs, and guide our vision for the future. Parents have come together to talk about housing, health, and education, while our self-advocates' group met regularly to discuss everything from Rights and Responsibilities to Speed Friendship! Whether shared over a meal, in a program, or around a boardroom table, our conversations open space for opportunities to be explored

and connections to be built — connections that strengthen our organization and make our community more inclusive and welcoming. I am grateful for these conversations that inform and inspire, and I look forward to them continuing in the year ahead.

And as I reflect on the past year and look ahead to the next, I want to thank our CEO, Shannon Crofton, and the Aspire Richmond management team and staff, whose dedication makes such a difference in the lives of the people we support and their families. Thank you also to our Board members and the volunteers who serve in our programs and committees for being so generous with their time and insight.

Wishing you all the best — and Happy Holidays!

Annette Delaplace, Board Chair

Celebrating the Dhinjal Family's Incredible Commitment



Every nonprofit has a story about an exceptional person, family, or company that goes above and beyond year after year. For us, that story belongs to the Dhinjal Family.

For the past 13 years, Surjit, Pardeep, and their family have been unwavering champions of our mission. Their dedication has not only raised awareness but has also provided vital resources that allow us to serve our community. This year, they truly outdid themselves—raising an astounding \$32,000!

Their generosity is more than financial; it's deeply personal. Surjit and Pardeep's devotion to their children shines through in everything they do. Maya, who has been part of

our organization since she was just four months old, has grown into an inspiring young woman before our eyes. Watching her journey has been a gift to all of us.

We are profoundly grateful to the Dhinjal Family for their loyalty, leadership, and love. Their efforts remind us that when people come together with passion and purpose, extraordinary things happen.

Thank you, Dhinjal Family, for being the heart of our community and for making a lasting difference.

Message from the CEO

As the year draws to a close, I want to take a moment to reflect on the season and the meaningful connections we've built together at Aspire Richmond.

The holidays are a time for gathering, gratitude, and celebrating the relationships that enrich our lives. This year, one of the most powerful reminders of our shared purpose came during our staff conference. It was inspiring to see so many of you come together, exchanging ideas, sharing stories, and strengthening the bonds that make our organization thrive.

Moments like these remind us that connection is at the heart of everything we do. Whether it's the collaboration between colleagues, the trust built with families, or the support we offer to the individuals we serve, these relationships are what define Aspire Richmond.

As we head into the holiday season, I encourage you to take time to rest, reflect, and enjoy the company of those around you. Thank you for your dedication, your compassion, and the spirit you bring to our community.

Wishing you a joyful and peaceful holiday season.

Warmly,
Shannon Crofton



Dreams Take Flight Aspire children go to Disneyland!



On October 1st, four children from Aspire had the most amazing opportunity to fly to Disneyland! Their journey was made possible by Dreams Take Flight, a volunteer-run charity that gives children facing medical or life challenges the chance to experience a day filled with joy and wonder. Since 1989, Dreams Take Flight have flown children to either Disneyland Park in California or Walt Disney World in Florida, with this year marking their 30th flight from BC with 126 children on board.

The four children from Aspire had the time of their lives with some being on their first flight ever! The flight departed from the Air Canada hangar, where the children said their goodbyes to their families before taking their seats. One of my favourite moments was when they got a chance to speak to the pilots and to sit in the cockpit! They had the biggest smiles and the most captivated eyes while they took in the moment.

From the moment they arrived at Disneyland, their excitement was non-stop. They conquered rides big and small, fastest to scariest, and, of course, ate some great ice cream and churros. After every ride, the children would give and share their rankings of the experience, forming friendships and creating lasting memories. By the end of the day, the flight back home was silent, as most of the children on the flight went into dreamland.

A big thank you to Dreams Take Flight for once again inviting us on this year's flight. We feel deeply grateful that Aspire could continue to partner with this inspiring organization. We hope for more years to come!

Camille Barcita, Senior Counsellor of Seedlings Preschool



Horseback Riding Dream Comes True — with Even More Joy!

For a long time, Nicole, and Chantal each dreamed of getting back in the saddle. Like many post-COVID dreams, it felt just out of reach. But sometimes, the best surprises come when we least expect them!

The exciting call came — both Nicole and Chantal were invited to join weekly horseback riding sessions at Twin Oaks! And to make it even more special, these two best friends ride on the same day and time.

Their shared laughter, confidence, and pure joy truly make this experience twice as sweet. Here's to dreams coming true — and to riding them side by side. Double the fun, double the smiles!

Wioletta Okwieka-Reduch
Quantum Day Program Manager



Celebrations at Synergy

On October 20th 2025 Synergy celebrated Diwali, also known as the Festival of Lights. We had Mendhi artists (tattooed hands) as well as delicious food and some dancing. All 4 of the Community Inclusion programs at Aspire participated as well as some other special guests.

On Halloween, we did pumpkin carving and though we dress for Halloween every year, this year, the costumes were top notch. Synergy had so much fun playing games having treats and partying together.



Calling all Student Artists!

Help us celebrate Inclusive Education

Aspire Richmond's
Inclusive Education Committee
is inviting student artists to submit
artwork to be featured at an
inclusive education event:



*Possibility through
Partnership*

a **THINK TANK** ON Inclusive Education



Details:

On February 13, 2026, educators, parents, students, community partners, academics, and administrators will come together to explore the transformative power of true inclusive education. This full-day event will feature inspiring guest speakers, engaging entertainment, and meaningful conversations about creating inclusive learning environments for all.

To help bring this vision to life, Aspire's Inclusive Education Committee is inviting student artists to contribute artwork that celebrates inclusion.

These student-created pieces will be proudly displayed throughout the venue, creating a vibrant and welcoming atmosphere that reflects the heart of inclusive education.

Submission Deadline: January 30, 2026

Submission Options:

- **Drop off artwork** at Aspire Richmond:
170-7000 Minoru Blvd., Richmond, BC
Attention: Carrie McLellan-Haqq
- **Email** photographs or scans of artwork to:
info@aspirerichmond.com

Artwork will be displayed with the student's first name, grade, and school (with student/ parent/ guardian permission). After the event, artwork can be picked up at Aspire Richmond.

All participating students will receive a certificate of completion and be entered into a prize draw to celebrate their contribution.

Let's fill the room with creativity, compassion, and the spirit of inclusion.

Opening Doors: How Aspire Richmond Helps People Discover Their Strengths and Find the Right Job

At Aspire Richmond, we believe that everyone deserves the chance to find meaningful work — work that celebrates their strengths, builds confidence, and helps them grow. For over 15 years, we've supported individuals with developmental disabilities to explore employment opportunities and connect with workplaces where they can thrive.

But how do we get there?

It all starts with Discovery, which is a personalized, and affirming process that helps us get to know each person deeply, and helps them get to know themselves.

What Is Discovery?

Discovery is the first step in our employment journey. Over 4 to 6 weeks, we spend time with each job seeker in familiar environments to learn about their interests, strengths, and the kinds of tasks they enjoy. We also look at areas where they might need more support or training.

This isn't a test. It's a chance to explore. We want to understand what makes someone tick, what they're passionate about, and what kind of work might be a great fit.

Building Confidence Through Assessment

After Discovery, we offer a Work Readiness Assessment. This gives us, and the job seeker, a clearer picture of their current skills and where they might want to grow. It includes practical tasks like money handling, using computers, as well as important soft skills and skills for daily living.

Here's what one participant, Kanta Kogiso, had to say:
"I really enjoyed doing the assessments. They helped me see what I'm good at, what I need to practice, and what kinds of jobs might fit me best. I also learned some helpful new skills along the way."

These assessments help people build confidence and understand their strengths and they help us make thoughtful recommendations when it's time to look for work.

Exploring Possibilities

Once we understand someone's strengths and interests, we move into Job Exploration and Planning. This might include workplace tours, job shadowing, or short mentorships. These experiences help job seekers try out different roles and discover what feels right.

Support Every Step of the Way

When someone is ready to apply for jobs, we're there to help with applications, interviews, and even working interviews, where employers can see someone's skills in action.

And once someone is hired, our Job Coaches provide hands-on support to help them learn the ropes and settle in. If challenges come up, we don't walk away; we work with both the employee and the employer to find solutions.

A Journey of Growth

The Discovery process is more than a pathway to employment — it's a journey of self-discovery and empowerment. It helps people understand their strengths, build confidence, and take meaningful steps toward independence.

If you're curious about how Aspire Richmond can support your family member in their employment journey, we're happy to answer your questions.

Annabel Melnyk and Katherine Ollson
Employment Services Managers



Shine a Light on Community Inclusion

Aspire RICHMOND

50/50 CASH LOTTERY

Great odds for a good cause!

Draw Date: Dec 18, 2025 at 12pm

thriving. connected. happy. www.aspirerichmond.com

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Please consider supporting Aspire's programming in areas where we do not receive dedicated funding.

Last year's winner received approximately \$2,650, and thanks to those contributions Aspire was able to purchase furniture for an individual we support who was moving into their very first home. Your generosity helps us create meaningful opportunities and provide essentials that make a real difference in people's lives.



Scan/Click here to buy your tickets today!

Seedlings Multipurpose Hub
6380 Number 3 road, Richmond, BC

For info contact Denise Abegg
dabegg@aspirerichmond.com

Hosted by

Aspire Richmond
Self Advocates
Group

Give the
gift of a
lifetime



You're invited!



Join our community
engagement session
to inform Community
Living BC's 2026-2029
Strategic Plan

Two chances to join us for a
pizza party!

Friday, January 30th 2026
12:30pm – 2:30pm

Thursday, February 5th 2026
4:00pm – 6:00pm



You have decided it is time to do some estate planning, and you want to leave a bequest to your child with a disability. Consider speaking to your planner about a **Henson Trust**.

The advantage of this type of trust is that it will not affect your child's ability to receive government benefits. You select a trusted individual who has full discretion over the trust and makes decisions on behalf of your child. You can also stipulate that the residual of that trust be donated to a charity, offsetting taxes and such at the time of your child's passing.

For more information,
please email Sue Street,
Manager of Fund and Community Awareness
sstreet@aspirerichmond.com



Speed Friendship

On Tuesday, November 18th Aspire Richmond Outreach and Self Advocates group hosted our first ever Speed Friendship event. This was a rousing success! We welcomed people from all over Aspire as well as Kyndred Self Advocates and CLS self advocates. A group of around 40 took 4 minute turns chatting in pairs and getting to know each other. Some used prompts, some went unscripted. New friendships and connections were made. By the end of the event laughter and conversation filled the room with several new friendships forming. Special thank you goes out to Emily Wheatley with Kyndred Society for pioneering this work and generously allowing us to continue these events. Thank you to everyone who came out and made this event a great success! If you missed out this time, have no fear. Talks are in the works for a 2026 edition of Speed Friendship. See you there!

The best things in life aren't things.
They're your friends!



*Aspire Richmond
Kindness Committee*

HOLIDAY FOOD & GIFT DRIVE



NOVEMBER 12 TO DECEMBER 12

DONATION SUGGESTIONS:

NON-PERISHABLE FOOD ITEMS (CHECK EXPIRY DATES)

GIFT CARDS FOR FOOD, CLOTHING, ACTIVITIES, PRODUCE &
RESTAURANTS

CASH DONATIONS TO PURCHASE GIFT CARDS

NEW & UNUSED TOYS, GIFTS FOR CHILDREN (BOOKS, GAMES, ETC.)

HOUSEHOLD ITEMS SUCH AS TOILETRIES

*We are accepting donations
until December 12*

Scan to Donate



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