

# VIEWS

April  
2026



Celebrating  
16 years of work  
and loving it!

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At Aspire Richmond, we often talk about community, and this season has been a powerful reminder of just how strong and connected our community truly is.

Every day, I see the impact of people coming together with shared purpose: individuals we support advocating for their goals, families partnering with us in meaningful ways, staff showing extraordinary dedication and compassion, volunteers giving their time and talents, and community partners walking alongside us to create more inclusive spaces. It is this collective effort that makes Aspire what it is.

As an organization, we continue to grow and adapt in response to the changing needs of the people and families we support. We are seeing increased complexity across services, evolving expectations within our sector, and exciting opportunities to strengthen how we work together. In the midst of this, Aspire remains grounded in what matters most, supporting people to live thriving, connected, and happy lives.

This year has also been a time of reflection and preparation. As we move toward accreditation, we are taking the opportunity to look closely at our practices, celebrate what we do well, and identify where we can continue to improve. This process is not just about meeting standards, it's about ensuring we are delivering high-quality, person-centred services now and into the future.

I want to take a moment to express my sincere appreciation to our staff. The work you do is not easy, and it requires professionalism, creativity, resilience, and heart. Your commitment to the people we support and to one another does not go unnoticed. I am also deeply grateful to our Board of Directors for their leadership and governance, and to our donors and community partners whose support helps expand opportunities across Aspire.

As we look ahead, I am excited about what we are building together: stronger programs, deeper connections, and a more inclusive community for everyone. Thank you for being part of Aspire and for continuing to believe in what is possible when people are supported, heard, and valued.

We're excited to share that Aspire will soon be opening a new Community Inclusion day program as part of our LIFE services. This new program will expand opportunities for participants to build skills, connect with their community, and continue their personal growth.

The program is planned to begin supporting participants late this spring!

As part of the process of developing this new program we recently invited team members and participants from across Aspire to submit ideas for the name of our new Community Inclusion program. The response was fantastic, more than 30 creative suggestions were submitted.

From there, we narrowed the list to a top three, which were reviewed and voted on by a selection panel. After thoughtful consideration, we are proud to announce that the new program will be called:

### **Ascent**

The name Ascent aligns beautifully with our existing program names: Quantum, Synergy, Transitions, and Avenues, and reflects the growth, progress, and achievements participants can expect as they engage in this new opportunity. It symbolizes upward movement, empowerment, and the shared journey toward greater inclusion.

Please join us in celebrating this exciting new chapter and in congratulating Rolando Abando, whose suggestion was selected as the winning name. Rolando will receive a gift card in recognition of his creativity and contribution.

Thank you to all the team members and participants who submitted ideas and helped shape the identity of this new program. Your enthusiasm and engagement continue to elevate our work and strengthen our community.

Here's to the launch of Ascent and to the many accomplishments it will inspire.

# Aspire's Infant Development Program

Watching your little one grow is a joyful journey filled with countless memorable moments — that first smile, a new sound, or those brave, wobbly first steps. Every child develops at their own pace, and sometimes milestones don't arrive quite when we expect them to. If you have noticed your child is struggling to reach certain milestones or if you have specific concerns about their development, you are not alone. And you don't have to navigate those questions by yourself. Aspire Richmond's Infant Development Program is here to support you every step of the way.

The Infant Development Program (IDP) is a community-based early intervention service for children from birth to their third birthday who may be at risk for developmental delays, who are already experiencing delays, or who have a formal diagnosis. Funded by the Ministry of Children and Family Development, the program is entirely voluntary, family-centered, and free of charge.

Our Infant Development Consultants are trained professionals dedicated to partnering with families during these important early years. We work alongside you to support your child's growth through personalized strategies, activities that encourage emerging skills, and guidance tailored specifically to your child's needs. We can also help connect you with community resources and services that can further strengthen your child's development.

If you have concerns about your child's progress — or if you know a family who could benefit from early developmental support — we invite you to learn more. You can access additional information or complete an online referral here: [Infant Development Program – Aspire Richmond](#).

Together, we can help your child thrive.

Elaine Kwok, Manager of Infant Development



## Community connections

Kent attends Synergy Day program. Over the years he has built wonderful friendships with firefighters across Richmond. His regular visits to local firehalls -and his cheerful greetings when he sees crews in the community - bring joy to everyone involved.

Kent's enthusiasm for firefighting has created lasting connections and continues to be a highlight of his time in the community.

Lisa Sarai, Manager of LIFE Synergy Community Inclusion



## Celebrating 16 years of work and loving it!

My name is Emily. This year, I am celebrating 16 years at my job at Cowell Auto Group; I started in 2010. Cowell Auto Group was developed by a family in 1967. It began with the father, and after he passed, the business was taken over by his two sons. The company is located in the Richmond Auto Mall and owns Audi, Volkswagen, Land Rover, and Jaguar. In 2021, Cowell Auto Group was acquired by Go Auto, ending 54 years of family ownership.

I started in the Volkswagen department before being transferred to Audi after about a year or so, and I have been there ever since. I work in the service department. My main duty is scanning documents and making sure everything is scanned properly. I am always given a big pile to work through, and some documents are over 100 pages. Sometimes my job can be frustrating if the pages get jammed in the scanner or if I miss a staple. I don't usually finish everything by the end of my shift, but when I do, it feels great.

One of my coworkers is Andrew, and he has been a huge help over the last 15 years. We work in the same office. His role at Audi Richmond is Warranty. Andrew works hard and long hours, and he has a great sense of humor. We often joke and tease each other. He helps me when I have computer issues or when I accidentally jam the printer.

Over the years, management has treated employees very well. My coworkers sometimes treat us to food like pizza and donuts. The company usually celebrates Christmas with a Christmas party. Our last party was at Five Sails Restaurant at Canada Place, where we enjoyed a high-end four-course meal. The best part was the dessert. One unique Christmas party experience we had was at the Vancouver Aquarium, where we were able to explore some exhibits while chatting with coworkers. One year, I won a TV, and another year I won an Amazon Echo Dot, and last year Apple AirPods.

When I first started, management hosted monthly BBQs. They were a lot of fun, and I miss them. Now, they've introduced something I really enjoy, once a month, they bring in a new food truck. I've tried many different foods, this month was Steamworks, and previously we've had Shameless Buns. There have been many others, but I can't remember all the names.

I can't believe it's already been 16 years. The years have gone by so fast. So many interesting and challenging things have happened, with lots of new faces and still some familiar ones. I'm proud of myself for receiving my 5, 10, and 15-year awards. I also received the Presidential Award in 2014.

Emily, Aspire Independent Living

**"I'm excited for what the future holds, both for the company and for my own personal growth."**

- Emily

## Celebrating Life in Home Share

Home Share is more than a living arrangement — it's a place where people build relationships, discover new routines, and create a sense of belonging. We got a chance to connect with Graeme and Audrey, who shared what Home Share means to them in their everyday lives.

For Graeme, Home Share has been a fresh start. Having moved into his current Home Share in April 2024, Graeme is settling into a supportive environment where daily life feels steady and cared for. Audrey, on the other hand, has been with the same Home Share provider since 2005 — a remarkable 19 years of consistency, trust, and shared experiences. Their stories remind us that Home Share can be both a new beginning and a long-term home.

Both Graeme and Audrey spoke about the thoughtful gestures that brighten their days. Graeme appreciates the delicious meals prepared at home, especially the omelettes, and the kindness that comes with them. Audrey enjoys the companionship of going shopping with their caregiver and still remembers a special trip they took together to Los Angeles. Pancakes, and Chinese food, especially chicken and rice, are among the comforts that make home feel warm and familiar.

Daily routines become meaningful when shared with someone who cares. Graeme enjoys going out for appointments, eating together, and the occasional shopping trip. Audrey loves browsing for bags and going out to eat, simple outings that bring joy and connection.

Home is also a place to unwind. For Graeme, happiness comes from watching the Lions and Whitecaps play or simply enjoying the sunshine. Audrey finds comfort in being close to family especially having the chance to see her sister often. These moments of calm are part of what makes Home Share feel truly personal.

Everyone has hopes for the future, and Graeme and Audrey are no exception. Graeme dreams of taking a vacation, maybe to Calgary, the northern territories, or even a cruise. Audrey is thinking about the next chapter too, imagining a quieter life in White Rock as Richmond becomes busier.

Their goals remind us that Home Share is not just about today's support, but also about planning for tomorrow's possibilities.



Graeme and Audrey's experiences highlight what makes Home Share so special: supportive relationships, shared routines, and a sense of belonging. Whether it's a home-cooked meal, a trip to the store, or simply knowing someone is there, these everyday moments create a foundation of comfort and connection.

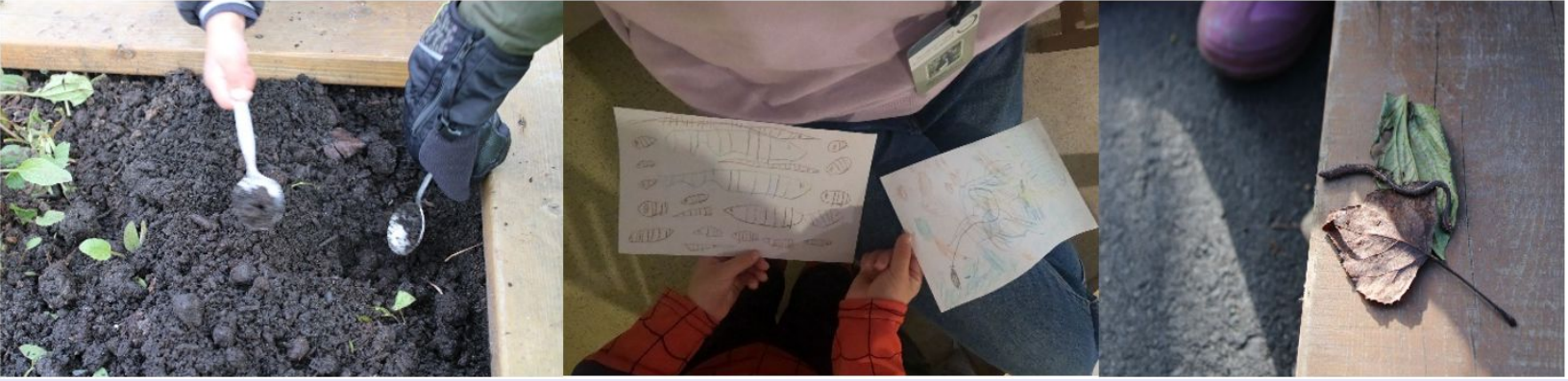
Tiffany Da Cruz, Manager of Independent Living

## Transitions enjoys exploring all things 'wheely' in the community.

Whether it's riding in our own van, taking a spin around Tsawwassen Mills or checking out the latest and greatest car at the Auto Show, participants at Transitions love 'wheeling' around in the community!

Colin Wong, Manager Transitions Community Inclusion





## Exciting Partnership Between Treehouse and the ECPN: A Focus on Pedagogical Growth

We are excited to share news of a dynamic partnership between Treehouse and the Early Childhood Pedagogy Network (ECPN). Through this collaboration, our team has gained fresh perspectives and valuable insights that are actively shaping our approach to early childhood education. By working closely with the ECPN, we are deepening our commitment to documenting children's activities and interactions, developing meaningful [pedagogical narrations](#), and thoughtfully aligning our practice with recognized frameworks. These efforts are all aimed at cultivating a learning environment where each child's unique interests and developmental needs are at the forefront.

One of the key areas of focus has been the role of documentation in early childhood education. Documenting children's activities and interactions helps educators understand developmental progress, interests, and learning styles. It also provides valuable insights that inform planning, ensuring that activities are tailored to meet each child's unique needs.

Our team has been actively engaged in creating pedagogical narrations around the interest and discovery of worms in our garden. We are also documenting their new interests in cooperative sports, such as hockey and basketball. These narrations serve as reflective tools to capture the essence of children's learning experiences and a guide to where their interests are leading.

We have begun exploring the Early Learning Framework, a vital resource that guides our work with children. By relating our daily activities to this framework, we ensure that our practices promote holistic development, cognitive, social, emotional, and physical. This alignment helps us create intentional learning experiences that support children's growth and development in a comprehensive manner.

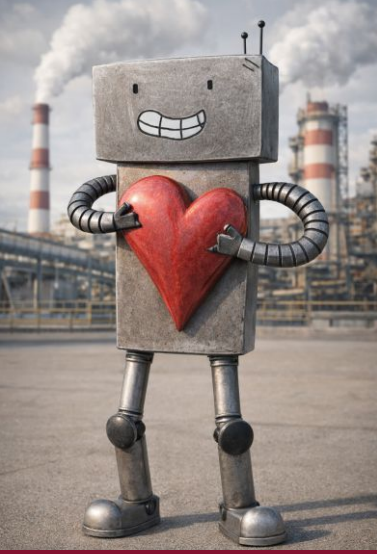
Our dedicated [Pedagogist](#), has brought valuable learning opportunities that have enriched our practice. We are excited about the ongoing journey of professional growth and are eager to incorporate more child-centered activities into our daily routines at Treehouse. This continuous learning process aims to foster an environment where children feel empowered, engaged, and supported in their developmental journey.

In conclusion, the partnership between Treehouse and the ECPN is fostering a culture of reflective practice, intentional planning, and child-centered learning. We look forward to further collaborations and the positive impact they will have on our children, families, and educators.

Angela Yodogawa, Manager of Treehouse early Learning Centre

The word “pedagogy” has taken on a life of its own. For many of us in early childhood education, pedagogy may be best known by its developmental conceptualization as the study of how learning happens or how to teach students to make them learn better.

~ Early Childhood Pedagogy Network



*Possibility through  
Partnership*  
a **THINK  
TANK**  
*ON Inclusive  
Education*



Scan/Click  
for more  
resources!



For four decades, Aspire's Inclusive Education Committee has championed the rights and needs of children and youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Its work has consistently pushed beyond the goal of ending segregation, advocating instead for a system that recognizes every learner's strength and supports the full diversity of students in Richmond.

On February 13, 2026, Richmond Secondary School became a hub of collaboration as 45 educators, administrators, parents, students, and community organizations gathered for *Possibility Through Partnership: A Think Tank on Inclusive Education*. Hosted by Aspire's Inclusive Education Committee, the event created space for meaningful dialogue, shared learning, and renewed commitment to strengthening inclusive education across the Richmond School District.

The 2026 Think Tank built on a legacy of collaboration that began with the Committee's first Think Tank held May 2015 and the Parent night that took place May 2025. That inaugural gathering brought together parents, students, educators, school leaders, and partner organizations to "generate ideas, build on existing partnerships, create new ones with the outcome of enhancing inclusive education practices." Eleven years later, the spirit of that mission remains strong. Participants at this year's event continued the work of imagining what is possible when schools and communities commit to inclusion not as an aspiration, but as a shared responsibility.

Through open conversation, collective problem-solving, and the exchange of lived experiences. The insights and relationships strengthened during the event will help guide ongoing efforts to ensure that every student in Richmond, regardless of ability, is welcomed, supported, and empowered to learn.

From information gathered and learned during the recent Think Tank, Aspire's Inclusive Education Committee continues to plan for advocacy and collaboration that lays ahead and that will help in shaping a future where all learners belong and are celebrated. The Committee will review the outcomes from the Think Tank and based on these insights, develop a series of actionable steps that will guide their ongoing efforts. These actions will shape the Committee's work for years ahead, ensuring meaningful impact.

We appreciate everyone who made the Think Tank a success and extend special thanks to the talented artists whose work enriched the event. We would like to congratulate a Grade 6 student from Anderson Elementary School for winning the Think Tank artist draw.

Carrie McLellan-Haqq, Director of Children's Services and Member of the Inclusive Education Committee Member.

*The Inclusive Education Committee consists of parents, self-advocates, Richmond School District educators and Aspire staff. Our responsibilities include promoting opportunities and materials for inclusive educational practices benefiting families, educators and students as well as making recommendations to the Aspire Board for advocacy related to public education issues and changes that affect students with developmental disabilities.*

*If you are interested in becoming a member of the committee, reach out to Carrie [cmclellan@aspirerichmond.com](mailto:cmclellan@aspirerichmond.com)*



## A planning change is coming to Children's Services...

At Aspire, we are committed to evolving how we support families we serve. We are excited to announce the adoption of the "F-Words," a framework designed to shift to holistic, strengths-based perspective.

Developed in 2011 by Dr. Rosenbaum and Dr. Gorter of CanChild, this framework builds upon the World Health Organization's (WHO) International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF) Framework. The F-Words emphasize the factors most essential to a person's development and quality of life: function, family, friends, fitness, fun, and future.

The objective of this framework is to focus on active participation in everyday life. To bring this vision to Aspire, we have established a dedicated F-Words Implementation Committee.

The committee is currently developing a planning tool designed to facilitate meaningful conversations between families, individuals, and service providers. Our goal is to create a collaborative space that highlights strengths, hopes, and interests while ensuring that specific needs and goals remain at the forefront.

We look forward to sharing more updates as we implement this empowering new approach to care and communication.

Amy Marchal, IDP Consultant

# FUNCTIONING FAMILY FITNESS FRIENDS FUN FUTURE

Click here to watch a video Introducing the F-Words Framework

## The Six F-Words for Child Development

**1 FUNCTIONING**  
I might do things differently but I CAN do them. How I do it is not important. Please let me try!

**2 FAMILY** My family knows me best and I trust them. Listen to them. Talk to them. Hear them. Respect them.

**3 FITNESS**  
Everyone needs to stay fit and healthy both physically and mentally. Help me find ways to keep fit.

**4 FRIENDS** Having friends is important. Please give me opportunities to make friends.

**5 FUN** Life is about having fun. Please help me do the activities that I find the most fun.

**6 FUTURE** I am growing up every day, so please find ways for me to participate and be included in my community.

<https://www.canchild.ca/en/parents-in-practice/curriculum-in-childhood-disability>  
 Proudly supported by the Aljegan Foundation  
 Based on Rosenbaum, J. & Gorter, J. (2012). The F-Words in childhood disability: I want to be like you! How we should think about Child Care Health and Development, 118-4. Visit <https://www.canchild.ca/en> for more on global needs in childhood disability in your region.

Click here to visit the CanChild F-Words website

"It doesn't matter how you function, or how you accomplish the things you wish to accomplish, the important thing is that you get to do what you want to do. In this regard, we need to annihilate the concept of 'normal'."  
— Dr. Jan Willem Gorter, Co-Creator of the F-Words and Former Director of CanChild



You might be hearing that Accreditation word around Aspire these days. In order to maintain our funding from the Ministry of Children and Family Development and Community Living BC, we must go through the accreditation survey process once every 3 years.

We have been accredited by CARF since 2005. CARF is an independent organization that looks at agencies like Aspire Richmond to make sure we are providing safe, respectful, and person-centred services. Being accredited helps confirm that we are doing good work and continuing to improve.

We are getting ready for our upcoming survey, and we wanted to share what this means and why it matters.

### When will it happen?

Monday April 27, 2026 - Wednesday April 29, 2026!

### What will happen?

Over 3 days, CARF surveyors will spend time learning about Aspire. They will:

- Visit most of our locations
- Talk with people we support, families, staff, and our funders
- Learn about how our services are provided
- Look at how we support rights, choice, inclusion, safety, and more
- Provide recommendations and suggestions in areas where we have opportunities to learn and grow

The surveyors are friendly and experienced; they work or have worked in similar agencies.

### What does this mean for Aspire?

The CARF survey is an opportunity to:

- Celebrate our strengths
- Highlight the voices of people we support and families
- Learn how we can continue to improve our services

We are proud of the work happening across Aspire and grateful to everyone who helps make our community welcoming, inclusive, and supportive.

If you have any questions or would like to know more information, please speak with an Aspire Program Manager. Thank you for being part of Aspire Richmond.

Sue Jones, Director of Respite Services and Quality Assurance

**Join us to hear the results of the survey and celebrate with us:  
Wednesday April 29 at 2pm at Seedlings,  
6380 No 3. Rd Richmond.**



## CLBC Strategic Plan Engagement

Self-Advocates, Rebecca White and Maxx Friedman from Aspire Richmond's Self Advocates group journeyed to the Sunshine Coast for the last of the CLBC Strategic Plan Engagement sessions.

Supported by Outreach staff Matthew Taylor and Denise Abegg we arrived at the Roberts Creek Community Hall on March the 10<sup>th</sup> to set up our sessions. We welcomed 29 self-advocates and their support networks who braved the threat of snow to come out and have conversations with us. The session and engagement exceeded our expectations. It was a wonderful time!

We want to extend a heartfelt thank you to Lesley Clarke, Executive Director for the Sunshine Coast Associate for Community Living (SCACL) for helping us have such a successful turn out in the community. We appreciate all the connections we made and look forward to future collaborations.

Denise Abegg, Manager of Outreach



## HME BC's Genuine, Thoughtful Approach to Inclusive Hiring

When a new job seeker joined Aspire Richmond Employment Services, he was looking for more than just a job - he wanted a chance to build a future. What followed is an example of how the right employer partnership can turn 'potential' into 'meaningful employment'.

Through Aspire's collaboration with HME BC, a Richmond-based company specializing in the production and rental of medical equipment, our job seeker was introduced to an opportunity to work as a Technician. From the outset, HME demonstrated a thoughtful and inclusive approach to hiring. Instead of relying on a traditional interview, they invited our candidate to participate in a tour and working interview, giving him the chance to experience the role firsthand and demonstrate his abilities in a real-world setting.

This hands-on approach reflects HME's commitment to recognizing potential, not just resumes. Their team created a welcoming environment where he felt comfortable, supported, and confident in showing what he could do. It quickly became clear that he was a strong fit.

Our candidate accepted an offer which included a competitive wage and officially started work at the beginning of February. Since then, he's been building his skills, contributing to the team, and working toward future growth in the company.

This success story highlights more than one man's journey - it speaks to the power of inclusive employers. HME has shown a genuine interest in partnering with Aspire Richmond and recognizes the value that our job seekers bring to the workforce.

We look forward to continuing this collaboration and creating more opportunities for other job seekers to succeed.

Annabel Melnyk, Manager of Employment Services



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**HandyCrew**  
COOPERATIVE

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Richmond HandyCrew Co-operative provides a reliable, skilled work crew for indoor and outdoor residential and commercial projects. HandyCrew supports regular contracts, occasional projects, and one-time jobs, using commercial-grade equipment and eco-friendly supplies wherever possible.

HandyCrew is a worker-owned co-operative. The crew members are invested in the success of the business and are committed to delivering quality service at affordable rates for Richmond residents and businesses. HandyCrew complies with all WorkSafeBC regulations and places a strong focus on safety for both employees and customers.

### **Spring is the perfect time to refresh your space!**

HandyCrew offers fast, reliable rubbish removal to help you clear out clutter with ease. Whether it's a one-time clean-up or support with a larger project, the HandyCrew team is ready to help. Ideal for spring cleaning, furniture and household item removal, or light renovation or move-out cleaning.

### **Let HandyCrew make your spring cleaning easier than ever!**



Matthew and David out on the job with smiles on their faces, ready to help you clear out the clutter quickly.



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Join our team  
and discover the  
possibilities!



## WE ARE HIRING!

### Join Aspire Richmond

Aspire Richmond is growing, and we are looking for dedicated, passionate, and motivated individuals to join our team! We currently have multiple positions available across different departments.

### Why Work With Us?

- Inclusive and supportive workplace
- Opportunities for career growth
- Meaningful work that impacts our community
- Collaborative and welcoming team culture

### Who We're Looking For

People who are:

- Responsible and reliable
- Team-oriented
- Passionate about supporting children, families, and the community
- Ready to learn and grow professionally



### How to Apply

Interested candidates can visit our Careers site to view all open positions and submit their application.

Come grow  
with us at  
Aspire  
Richmond!

Give the  
gift of a  
lifetime



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  
[info@aspirerichmond.com](mailto:info@aspirerichmond.com)

## Making every season a good one - at Quantum!

We can't wait for spring... but in the meantime, we're making winter work for us. Staying busy this time of year can be a bit of a challenge—but definitely not impossible. One day we're exploring the magic of the Vancouver Aquarium, the next we're getting our steps (and maybe a few laughs) in at the gym, or spending time taking care of our four-legged friends.

And somewhere in between? A little daydreaming about summer—because let's be honest, it's always just around the corner... right?

Grateful for the moments, the movement, and most of all—the friendships that make every season a good one.

Wioletta Okwieka-Reduch,  
Manager of LIFE Quantum Community Inclusion



HandyCrew is hosting a Shred Event to help community members securely dispose of sensitive documents.

This is a convenient and secure way to protect your personal information while supporting a local worker-owned co-operative.



# SHRED EVENT

**MAY 16**  
10AM – 2PM

**BY DONATION**

**7000 MINORU BLVD.**  
DRIVE-UP • DROP OFF SERVICES



RICHMOND  
**HandyCrew**  
COOPERATIVE

*Need a hand?  
... we can help!*

## Come share a cup of coffee with the CEO!

Have you ever wanted to share some creative ideas, thoughts or suggestions with Aspire's CEO?

Here is your chance! Come meet Shannon Crofton to share a coffee and a conversation.

This is open to all individuals, staff and families.

**May 12, 2-4pm**

At Richmond Caring Place, 170-7000 Minoru Blvd

RSVP if you can to 604-279-7040 or just drop in!

I look forward to seeing you soon!

Shannon Crofton, CEO

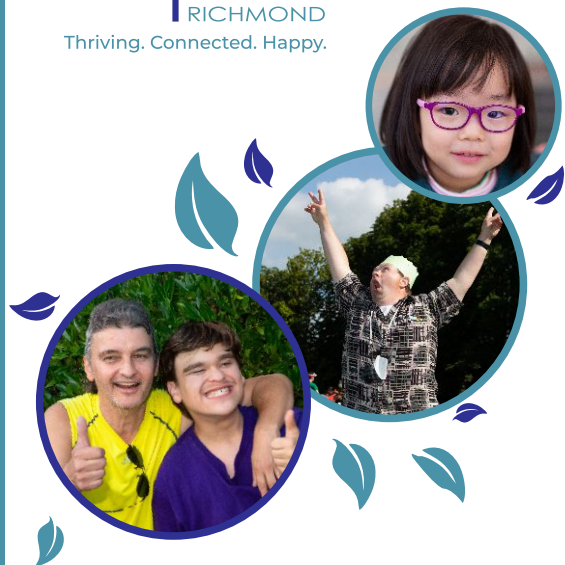


## MEMBERSHIP

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Single Membership:

\$10/year

\$100/lifetime

Family Membership (2 votes):

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\$150/lifetime

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