

Community Living Celebrates New Van at Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

July 2011 – GVCSS' Community Living program celebrated the arrival of its new wheelchair accessible van on July 20, 2011 with a ribbon cutting ceremony at Williams House group home. The event began with speeches made by COO Robin Turnill and CEO Ron McLeod thanking those whose contributions made the van possible, including recently deceased community leader, Mr. Milan Ilich. Then, Williams House resident Jude and Community Living Director Melanie Mendonca ceremoniously cut the red ribbon tied at the rear doors of the sparkling white van, officially declaring it ready to drive. The van was then taken on an inaugural ride around the neighbourhood with eager residents Jude, Tom, and Sean onboard, accompanied by Community Living Worker Nancy, and Melanie at the wheel.

The van, a Ford E350 which was purchased through First Bus, was modified by Mobility Works to accommodate all six Williams House residents: it has room for 3 wheelchairs and 3 additional passengers. The van will provide the residents with safe and reliable transportation to activities such as swimming, bowling and going to the movies - everyday activities which contribute to their sense of wellness and independence, both central goals of the Community Living program. Jude will also now be able to visit his mother who lives in a local long term care facility. Before acquiring the van, these visits were difficult to facilitate, and there were few options for Jude and his fellow residents to travel safely and easily in the Lower Mainland. The new van will give them access to their community and the opportunity to enjoy the activities which support their sense of independence and well-being.

The cost of the new van has exceeded the provincial funding which the Community Living program receives, therefore GVCSS has relied upon the generosity of its donors to make the dream of having a reliable and safe vehicle a reality. GVCSS is grateful to have received a substantial donation from the McLean Foundation. The largest contribution came from the late philanthropist and community pillar Milan Ilich through the Milan & Maureen Ilich Foundation. GVCSS CEO Ron McLeod comments that "the Ilich family has supported so many worthwhile community agencies through their Foundation and GVCSS feels honoured to be awarded this major donation." The new van is a legacy of Mr. Ilich's generosity, commemorating his community spirit with every trip, and with every smile given by the Williams House residents as they swim in the local pool or visit with a loved one.



The new van was decorated with red ribbon to mark the occasion.



CEO Ron McLeod honours the contributions of those who made the van possible while supervisor Les Babij, Director Melanie Mendonca and resident Jude look on.



Jude and Melanie cut the ribbon, declaring it ready to drive.



Residents Jude and Tom prepare for their first outing in the van while Community Living Worker Nancy secures their wheelchairs for the inaugural drive.