

## Message from the President and Executive Director

**A**s we reflect back over the past year we are struck by the many accomplishments that GVCSS has achieved as a multi-service organization, and by our collective will to overcome major challenges in an ever-changing environment.

Due in large measure to the support of funding authorities and dedicated staff, GVCSS provided direct health care services to over 10,000 individuals residing in the Lower Mainland in 2007-2008. We continued to deliver high quality services to a diverse and challenging client base; from individuals with acute physical and developmental disabilities, to fragile seniors with severe cognitive and mobility limitations, to service recipients with distinct cultural and language preferences, and finally to those persons encumbered by a myriad of societal/health issues associated with the symptoms of mental illness.



### Home Support Program

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The GVCSS Home Support program experienced phenomenal growth this year as total service hours provided to clients matched our high-water level of 2003. A significant portion of growth is attributed to the demand for essential health care services in the downtown east side of Vancouver. Our Agency has been identified as the preferred home support service provider for the majority of mental health referrals in the downtown core, and we have responded to the community's need for specially trained community health workers to assist clients living in dire and often intolerable circumstances. In many cases it is the caring and commitment shown by our staff that sustains these clients afflicted by multiple physical and mental disorders. GVCSS is fortunate to have such dedicated personnel serving this population.

A core value of this organization is to deliver the best possible care to each individual served and to enhance our services wherever the opportunity exists. In the past year our Home Support program has consistently been

recognized by the funding authority (Vancouver Coastal Health) for exceeding quality assurance requirements and for generally achieving excellence in all facets of service delivery. We take considerable pride in receiving this type of external validation from not only Vancouver Coastal Health, but also our clientele and the health care clinicians who partner with our Agency on a daily basis.

Internally, the Home Support administrative staff have worked tirelessly to develop more efficient models of care within small geographical areas. These "cluster-care" models attempt to maximize the use of home support services in apartment buildings or high density residential neighbourhoods by having the same workers assigned to clients living close together thereby ensuring greater continuity in the services delivered, better communication between clients and workers, and lastly, more stable working conditions for our employees.



### Community Living Program

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A significant milestone was reached in our Community Living Department this year as we completed our 20<sup>th</sup> year of operations. Since the closure of Woodlands School and the inception of our residential program in 1988, our Society has played a major role in addressing the needs of individuals with profound physical and developmental disabilities. The majority of the people we serve have been with us for over ten years; and quite a few have lived in community resources since our group homes opened in 1988. It is extremely gratifying to Board members and staff alike to see how well clients have done in a group home environment, and to be part of an Agency that supports these individuals in living up to their full potential.

To ensure that our group home sites comply with the rigorous licensing standards of regional health authorities, the Board embarked upon a significant capital investment plan this year. Renovations and improvements were

undertaken at all six locations covering major repairs such as roof replacements and drywall installation, in addition to smaller tasks such as repainting rooms and purchasing new appliances. The positive feedback to these improvements has been overwhelming, and it is quite evident when visiting the houses that the clients take a great deal of pride in showing off the changes to their home.

The biggest challenge facing the Community Living movement, including our residents, continues to be the unresolved question of how to design and fund a community care model which allows people with developmental disabilities to "age in place". With a growing number of our residents thriving and living longer in the community, our Society is looking at creating options that will anticipate the gerontological needs of the Community Living population. At GVCSS we are deeply committed to the health and welfare of the individuals in our care, and both our Board and senior management are constantly exploring ways to improve the living conditions in our group homes.



### **HandyDART/Custom Transit Program**

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Without a doubt the primary focus of the Society in 2007-2008 was to develop the best possible response to TransLink's tendering process for HandyDART services. Having been advised in advance by TransLink that they would be reducing the number of HandyDART contracts in the Lower Mainland from eight to three, and that preference would be given to operators that specialized in transit services only, GVCSS made a number of strategic decisions to address these service integration priorities of TransLink. The key decisions were: to bid on all service areas in the North of Fraser Region; to form a subsidiary company to operate these services; to seek partnership agreements with existing service providers in this region; to design a proposal that would level up and standardize wages and working conditions for all HandyDART personnel in the NOFA region and to ensure consumer involvement with the new transit entity. We accomplished all of these goals prior to the RFP deadline.

Backing up all of these commitments to TransLink was the fact that GVCSS has been delivering HandyDART services in an exemplary manner for over twenty-five years; furthermore we have earned an excellent reputation in the community for being sensitive and responsive to the needs of elderly and disabled passengers.

These very important service characteristics in addition to an extremely comprehensive service plan for the NOFA region were presented to TransLink in our Request for Proposal submission in June 2008.

Subsequently TransLink made an unexpected decision in August to award all custom transit services in the Metro Vancouver Region to an American transit provider with no HandyDART experience in Canada. This major realignment of the custom transit system, including the elimination of incumbent operators such as GVCSS, is scheduled to take effect January 1, 2009.

As of mid-September 2008, no operating contract has yet been ratified with TransLink and the proposed new service provider, however the GVCSS Board and senior management have felt it necessary to formulate and implement a transition plan that will anticipate the winding down of our custom transit operations by December 31, 2008.



Special thanks and appreciation go out to all of the GVCSS staff who worked so hard to prepare a competitive bid for these custom transit services. The RFP proposal was superb, and could be used as a blueprint for the integration of services in almost any human services agency. The Board would also like to commend the terrific transit staff in both our Simon Fraser and Richmond operations who give so much of themselves every day in the service of vulnerable clients. Our heartfelt appreciation goes out to the HandyDART employees for their many years of dedicated and professional service on behalf of GVCSS, and we trust that their skills will be valued and utilized by the new transit operator.

Acknowledgement is due as well to all of our Board Directors, as well as the administrative and direct care staff at GVCSS for their

commitment, enthusiasm and conscientious attitude in carrying out the objectives of this Society over the past year. Our "people first" philosophy is what makes GVCSS such a special organization to work in.

In closing, we are about to enter upon a transformational phase once again in the life of this Agency as we turn the page on one of our long standing service areas (custom transit), and begin to look more seriously at new opportunities for growth that are compatible with the goals of GVCSS.

*Lynn Carter, President*

*Ron McLeod, Executive Director*

Thanks to the excellent leadership abilities possessed by our Board of Directors and senior management, we are confident that GVCSS has a strong organizational structure and the resources available to pursue new initiatives that meet a real need in the community. With this in mind the Society is ready to embrace new challenges and is optimistic that the time is right to look outside the box. We look forward to an exciting year ahead.

