

Autism Connections
Fredericton Annual General
Meeting
Executive Director Report 2021 - 2022

Autism Connections Fredericton
acf@nb.aibn.com
(506)-450-602

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Highlights

GROWTH

Expansion of the centre to 3821 Square feet

- Conference room ~ Cameron's Room
- After School Room ~ Playroom
- Quiet Room
- 1 Group Room
- 4 Treatment Rooms
- Kitchen
- Work Room – ABA students
- Toy library
- Reception Area with Resources
- Playground

FUNDRAISERS

Spares and Strikes

Our annual Bowl-a-Thon raised \$22,925.00 this fall.

Superhero Fun-Run Walk

Our annual Superhero Fun-Run Walk raised \$10,235.19

EVENTS

Drive-by Santa

Santa Claus made this night magical for approximately 100 children who received a sensory-friendly visit with Santa.

Developments

In 2022, globally we met with fewer obstacles as we emerge from the shadows of Covid-19, and 2022 became a year of exponential growth for ACF. We have been well supported by our community partners and graciously recognized this past year. We are the beneficiaries of the proceeds being raised by Dave Lawrence's book 'Noah Bear' and Stalen and Chrystal Venator graciously made a donation from the sale of their book, 'Jokes are for Everyone'. In addition, United Way, The NB Children's Foundation, and the Fredericton Community Foundation have all significantly supported ACF through community grants.

After holding the Superhero Fun-Run Walk virtually for 2 years we were able to reunite with our community and host the event in person at Odell Park. We welcomed the returned participation of the 5th Canadian Division Support Base Gagetown (5CDSB) in both the run and the walk. The Fredericton Police department invited the attendees to climb through and experience the inside of a police cruiser while the Fredericton Fire department was also on-site with a ladder truck. As well, we had a special guest appearance from a Star Wars Storm Trooper. The fundraiser was a great success and we raised over \$12,000. A new development from this year's event was the program which we intend to grow this coming year.

Covid-19 was responsible for the inception of the Drive-By-Santa which we have explored and grown into a much-anticipated event. This event really showcases our community partnership with the 5th Canadian Division Support Base Gagetown who ensure Santa is delivered in style. The procession of community partners includes the RCMP who brought the newest K-9, 'Ren' and the Fredericton Police Force with two of their finest. New this year, we had York Sunbury Search and Rescue and the 2647 Oromocto Army Cadets who received the carloads of people as they moved through the ally of festive decorations and the St. Thomas University lady's basketball team sang Christmas carols under the direction of Greg Forsythe to bring the Christmas spirit. Fairstone Financial (Southside) continues to graciously be a signature sponsor ensuring that every child enjoys a present (stocking filled with sensory toys, stuffy, etc) from Santa.

We saw the end of the Ready, Willing, and Able Career Quest which offered employment support services to the Fredericton area, however, the Atlantic Autism Supports and Employment Network (AASEN) will continue until March 2023. In the meantime, ACF continues to offer a first-voice cofacilitated Employment Support Group that is virtually available across NB.

Camp Marvel hosted campers during the months of July and August. Our campers experienced one-on-one support, had daily trips to play at the park and in the wading pool, and each day was met with new activities and experiences. Last summer, we increased the number of weeks Camp Marvel was operational and provided an additional week to host a group of toddlers. In addition to supporting our campers, the Complex Skills Enrichment Program supported 3 children full-time for the 10 weeks of summer vacation.

ACF cemented a relationship with Social Development in providing Child and Youth Services and we have been working with the Department of Social Development to secure funding for adult services in the Skills Enrichment Program. This relationship is an inlet to access the program without financial barriers and is a viable option for social workers to include in their supports to provide behavioural support, skill acquisition, and social skills programs.

Our community partnership with the 5th Canadian Division Support Base Gagetown and the Military Family Resource Centre has continued to build. We were invited to participate in the International Persons with Disabilities Day Expo hosted by the Defence Advisory Group for Persons with Disabilities (DAGPWD) on Base Gagetown. The intent was to provide an event where persons who work on base could see what services and support are available for persons with disabilities in their community. Last spring, MFRC's Executive Director and the Day-care Director requested ACF's support to address some behavioural issues that they were trying to manage in 2 separate classrooms. Observations were made and classroom-wide recommendations were made to support a positive learning environment across the day-care.

Supporting complex cases has given ACF the opportunity to be instrumental in supporting clients working with multidisciplinary teams. These teams include the Methods & Resource Teams in the schools and/or the provincial Child-Youth Team (Integrated Service Delivery). ACF is involved in working with mental health professionals, social workers, and the department of education to best support clients and we are being recognized as a favourable partner in supporting and providing programming for school-aged autistic children.

ACF Started the KidzCorner Crew after-school program in September of 2022. There have been various challenges and barriers which has demonstrated the need for primarily one-on-one support. Many adjustments have been made to ensure the success of the program and to ensure the needs of the children are being met. The afterschool program is thriving.

ACF is attracting volunteers and students looking to complete experiential learning opportunities that are compulsory to their post-secondary program. We had 3 university student

volunteers in the afterschool program and a 4th volunteer in our toddler social skills group from UNB's Kinesiology program and 1 student from St. Thomas. In addition, we continue to be a highly regarded placement for UNB's Arts Internships, and we will be hosting a student pursuing a teacher's degree from Ontario in the spring. ACF has a request from a graphic design student from the University of Alberta looking for an opportunity to work at ACF through the Canada Summer Jobs program in the non-profit sector. Lastly, Eastern College has requested a meeting to discuss placements for Administrative Specialists, Personal Support Workers, Early Childhood Education students, and the Youth and Child Care Worker program. These are opportunities to educate future professionals on autism and on strategies to best support children with autism to thrive.

It is with excitement that we were able to hire Marie-Soleil Soucy upon the completion of her bachelor's degree and certificate in Applied Behaviour Analysis from UNB as she has been fundamental in the growth of the Complex Skills Enrichment Program. With the growth of the program, we contracted Wendy Weller, a Board Certified Behavior Analyst, to provide on-site clinical supervision over the Complex Skills Enrichment caseload in addition to supervising UNB's practicum students on-site. By adding a BCBA, we were able to launch a new initiative and provide parent training. The ability to provide parent training has proven to be a great asset and is sought after both by parents and by social workers from the Department of Social Development to include in their client support programs.

Sadly, we will be saying 'Goodbye' to Gillian Dobson who is pursuing her Master of Education in Counselling as she needs to focus her time and attention on her education. Gillian has been instrumental in supporting all initiatives over the past year and has provided the support which allowed me to turn my attention to additional opportunities for ACF. Gillian will be GREATLY missed.

In 2022 Autism Connections Fredericton has been able to stabilize a strong support system for our community of individuals, families and for the professionals supporting them. As we enter into 2023 our goal is to continue to provide sustainable services and explore innovative ways to bring additional services into the centre. Our focus will remain on providing high-quality programs that make a difference and create the best opportunities to support our community moving forward.

Programs of 2022

Program	Details	Numbers
Skills Enrichment Program	The Skills Enrichment Program is offered in partnership with UNB's Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) Certificate Program. We are providing behavioural support, academic tutoring, and skill acquisition as a part of the program's practicum requirements.	During 2022 the ABA student provided approximately 130 hours of direct support across 18 clients.
Skills Enrichment Program Complex	The Skills Enrichment Program is providing behavioural support and skill acquisition for more complex cases which requires additional resources and experienced clinicians. All cases are under the supervision of a BCBA.	During 2022 our staff provided on average 225 hours per month of direct support across 4 - 5 clients.
Employment Support Group	An online employment discussion led by first-voice concerning employment challenges, and successes, and offers encouragement and support. It is a place to meet with others to talk about employment, ask questions, and work toward employment goals.	Across 2022 there were 9 participants bi-weekly.
Career Quest	This program gives the tools and accommodations to assist in building the skills to complete a job search, prep for an interview, and tailor cover letters and resumes.	Across 2022 CQ had 8 participants.
Parent/Caregiver Support Group	Provides a safe, non-judgmental space, for individuals to discuss the challenges and barriers of supporting someone on the spectrum.	This group had been on hold due to Covid-19 and has re-emerged for the new year.
No Limits Soccer	No Limits is a non-competitive soccer team designed specifically for children ages 3-12 and helps develop the initial skills for soccer.	We had 30 participants.

<p>KidzCorner Crew Afterschool Program</p>	<p>KidzCorner is for students K - 5 and about learning through play while incorporating the foundations of core subjects into activities and provides opportunities that support the children in interactive play with their peers. Activities include crafts, science experiments, games, outings, etc.</p>	<p>Currently 9 participants</p>
<p>Membership Program</p>	<p>As a member of ACF, members are provided discounted rates for programs and services, an opportunity to vote at our AGM, and the first option to register for new programs or services.</p>	<p>165 members registered (77 families)</p>

Fundraising, Events, and Community Engagement

Event	Details
Camp Marvel	Camp Marvel hosted 45+ individuals between the ages of 3-18+ over 8 weeks!

Fundraiser	Details
Superhero Walk/Run	The Superhero Walk raised over \$10,000. This year's Superhero was held at Odell Park.
Spares and Strikes Bowl-a-Thon	We had 10 teams participate and raise money for our annual Bowl-a-Thon which was an overwhelming huge success and raised \$22,925.00

Community Engagement	Details
Drive-by-Santa	Approximately 100 children had a sensory-friendly personal visit with Santa. Each letter to Santa was answered with a personalized touch.
Vulnerable Persons Registry	ACF is proud of its partnership with the Fredericton police through the creation of the Vulnerable Persons Registry (VPR). The VPR promotes communication between vulnerable persons, people who support them, and the police by providing valuable information that can be used when police respond to a call involving the registered person. The information in the registry is used by police officers and other support personnel to best assist the individual in the event of an incident or an interaction.

Human Resources

Current Employees

Name	Position	Program	Funding
Shannon O'Brien	Executive Director		
Gillian Dobson	Employment Counsellor	Career Quest	Autism Nova Scotia (Done - 01/20/2023)
Marie-Soleil Soucy	Program Coordinator	Complex Skills Enrichment	Complex cases
Jennica Samms- Joseph	Behaviour Support Worker	Complex Skills Enrichment	Complex cases
Bailey Lemieux	Behaviour Assistant	Skills Enrichment	Arts 4000 - BioTalent
Ryan Later	After School Facilitator	After School Program	After School Program
Charlotte Connors	After School Facilitator	After School Program	After School Program
Laura Murdoch	After School Facilitator	After School Program	After School Program

2022 Applied Behaviour Analysis Practicum Students

Marie-Soleil Soucy	Skills Enrichment	ABA - Graduated (DEC)	Arts 4000
Bailey Lemieux	Skills Enrichment	Applied Bx Analysis	Arts 4000
Kim Mazerolle	Skills Enrichment	Applied Bx Analysis	Practicum
Laura Murdoch	Skills Enrichment	Applied Bx Analysis	Practicum
Arti Prajapati	Skills Enrichment	Applied Bx Analysis	Practicum (Done)

Partnerships of 2022

Autism Nova Scotia

Allow us to offer Atlantic region programs - programs expire 03/2023

- Employment: Career Quest and Employment Support Group
- Healthy Relationships Sexuality and Autism Programs

Working New Brunswick

ACF mentors recent graduates or persons with barriers to gaining employment experience working with persons with Autism and provide additional resources to our members.

Educational Institutes

Partnered with the University of New Brunswick, ACF offered an experiential learning placement for the Applied Behaviour Analysis certificate students, the faculty of arts internship, the faculty of business, and the Resonance College.

Community Partnerships

- AIDE Canada
- ASD-W
- Avenue NB
- 5th Canadian Division Support Base Gagetown
- Berni Williams Insurance -
- Military Family Resource Centre (MFRC)
- Viva Therapeutic Services
- OPAL Family Services
- Fredericton Playhouse
- Fredericton Transit
- McInnes Cooper Law
- Northrup
- Talk With Me
- Department of Social Development
- The University of New Brunswick
- Department of Health

Grant Partnerships

- Windsor Foundation
- Post Education Training and Labour (PETL)
- United Way
- New Brunswick Children's Foundation
- Fredericton Community Foundation
- Canada Summer Jobs
- Student Employment Experience Development (SEED)
- Fredericton Direct Charge Co-op Community Fund
- Working New Brunswick
- Fairstone Financial (Prospect Street)

Goals for 2023

Transition Pilot

A proposal was submitted in December to facilitate a program that will support 20 students from grades 9-12 in a student-focused transition program to explore post-secondary and life goals ~ if approved the program would begin in April.

Experiential Learning Opportunity

The Transition program will have an experiential component and in our partnership with 5CDSB there is the potential to connect with the trades on base to provide experiential learning opportunities.

Touch-a-...

Potential fundraiser in partnership with Base Gagetown and local first responders to provide a sensory-friendly way for individuals to experience the different land, air, and sea vehicles within their community.

Home Alone Program

Adapt a curriculum that is autism specific to teach individuals the necessities of being home alone.

Enrich Community Partnerships

Continue to work with community partners to provide education and awareness around autism in support of the individuals and their families.

Acknowledgments

A big thank you to the staff, students, and Board of Directors at Autism Connections Fredericton. With continued passion and motivation we will strive to build better services and support for families, individuals, and service providers!

A big thank you as well to the families who support our efforts and access our programs. And to the numerous community partners and contributors without whom we could not run the Centre effectively.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shannon O'Brien". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S' and 'O'.

Shannon O'Brien
Executive Director
Autism Connections Fredericton