



COMMUNITY NEWS

Summer 2026

Empowering people with disabilities since 1973



Looking Back, Moving Forward: A Year of Growth, Resilience, and Community

It has been a busy season of growth and transformation across all of our programs, made possible by the dedicated people who power our organization every day.

At our AGM in June, we took a moment to reflect on everything our team and community have accomplished over the past twelve months. The list is long and brings incredible pride. We will provide just a few highlights here. For more check out our 2025-2026 Impact Report: [here](#).

Expanding Opportunities in Our Day Program

Our Day Program services reached major milestones this past year.

Sustainable Funding & Fair Wages:

We successfully negotiated with the Department of Opportunities and Social Development (DOSD) to transition to a Block Funding model, securing our financial stability for the next two years. Alongside this, we committed to sustainable business plans and fair wages for participants working across our social enterprises (*Kuttin Kindling*, *Handy Wipers*, and *The Shops on Central*).

Launching the South Shore Work Abilities Program:

Following provincial budget cuts that ended the 43-year South Shore Work Activity Program, we quickly pivoted to launch the South Shore Work Abilities Program, our own Employment Centre.

New Activities & Sector Leadership:

Participants enjoyed an expanding lineup of activities based on their interests: yoga, pickleball, art, music, bowling, dances, karaoke, ukulele, soccer, bingo, crafts and more. As of May 26, we officially joined the Directions Council of Nova Scotia to network with peer organizations providing quality day program services and employment supports for people with disabilities.

Community Connections & Transitions:

We hosted a free Community BBQ at Picnic in the Park; during Fire Prevention Week we held a BBQ for the Chester Volunteer Fire Department to thank them for all they do for our community, while here they delivered a fire safety session; we hosted a community celebration for the official opening of Flemming House;

celebrated Stacey Macdonald's retirement after 38 years; welcomed Anna Whalen as our new Day Program Coordinator; and undertook a major renovation and revisioning of The Shops on Central to include the Garden Café, The Market and Bonny's Boutique Thrift Shop, with generous contributions from our landlord NILU Holdings and Chester Building Supplies.

"The Shops on Central is a gem. It is bright and cheery and the thrift shop is amazing" - Customer

Strengthening Our Homes and Operations

Growth in our Community Living services has brought historic developments to our organization:

Expanding Community Living Supports:

Two new homes were licensed, including Flemming House, named in honour of Jack Flemming and his family, whose vision ensured this home was built to support our community. In alignment with the NS Human Rights Remedy, two group homes also transitioned to small option models.



The past few months for Joanne have been busy. For many years Joanne shared her home with her friends Catherine and Jan. With the opening of Flemming House, Joanne chose to move to the new home, which offers fully accessible barrier-free living for her. She also recently began working at The Shops on Central serving customers.

continued from page 1

Team Growth & Leadership:

- Our workforce nearly doubled to 99 employees. To support this expansion, we hired three new Community Living Supervisors and welcomed back David Outhouse as Financial Coordinator, funded by the DOSD Service Evolution Fund grant. We have made a huge investment in recruitment led by our Human Resources Director and Community Living Director.
- Our Health Care Consultant continues to oversee the wellness of all participants living in our homes and has moved into the first floor of Flemming House so that she can be more available and accessible to all participants.

Strategic Vision:

The Service Evolution Fund grant is also funding a comprehensive renewal of our Strategic Plan, laying a strong foundation for our future. Behind the scenes, crucial organizational work took place to support our team and facilities:

- We negotiated a new collective agreement with our unionized Unifor employees, including a defined benefit pension plan.
- The Maintenance Department kept facilities safe and clear of ice and snow through winter, alongside ongoing infrastructure upgrades, particularly ramps and gutters.

- Fundraising underpins our ability to provide the range of opportunities available to participants at Bonny Lea Farm. The Fund Development Director and Fundraising & Events Committee hosted another successful slate of fundraisers and events, including our Annual Campaign, Claws for a Cause Lobster Fundraiser, Annual Benefit Golf Tournament, Chester's Got More Talent and Picnic in the Park.

"Growth is never by mere chance; it is the result of forces working together."

- Plans are underway to integrate more technology into our organization through an electronic scheduling and payroll program which will see significant investment in new software, hardware and training for all employees.

Honoring Leadership: A Special Thank You to outgoing Board Chair, John Biebesheimer

As we look back, we must highlight an extraordinary leader. After 9 years as Board Chair, John Biebesheimer is stepping down from the role, though remaining an active board member. John has guided us through some of the most exciting and challenging times in our history with integrity,

kindness, and unwavering standards. His dedication, to our participants and staff, set the benchmark for our work. Thank you, John, for your mentorship and visionary leadership. We extend a warm welcome to Cy Mayo as our incoming Chair. Cy has served on the Board for a number of years and we look forward to working closely with him as we further grow and adapt to the changing interests and needs of participants.

The Future is Bright

The founder of J.C. Penney once said, *"Growth is never by mere chance; it is the result of forces working together."* As we look ahead, our direction remains guided by the participants who choose Bonny Lea Farm. Their self-determination shapes everything we do, and with the combined strength and support of our staff, board, government, families, and community, the future is brighter than ever.

Karen Lake | Executive Director

Learn more:

Please take a moment to read through our 2025-2026 Impact Report: [here](#)

If you would like a print copy, send Liz an email at efinney@bonnyleafarm.ca and she will be happy to send you one.



Stronger & Better Together Building a more inclusive community

On a daily basis we strive to ensure that people with disabilities experience the strength of their voice — empowering them to make decisions and ensuring that their voices are heard.

It might mean going to the bank to deposit an Old Age Security cheque and then to the grocery store to do some shopping and taking the time it takes for them to make their way through the aisles and check out line at their speed.

It might mean being their hands while creating a sewing project, while they are in control of choosing the fabric and running the “gas pedal” on the sewing machine.

It might mean reaching out to Saint Mary’s University for special glasses to watch the solar eclipse when the ones we ordered didn’t arrive in time.

It might mean being curious and figuring out what they find enjoyable, and then supporting them in doing that.

It might mean seeing them move out on their own in the community and supporting them in learning how to call a taxi to come for their activities.

So many of these things involve us on a daily basis but involve you too. You are the bank teller, the grocery store clerk, the taxi driver, the person who donates a sewing machine or answers the phone at SMU. Creating a truly inclusive world takes every single one of us. Because when we all do our part, inclusion simply becomes the way we live.

Disability Support Class Action Information Session: September 16

Did you know that The Supreme Court of Nova Scotia approved the Nova Scotia Waitlist Settlement on November 12, 2025? And that claims must be submitted before March 2027?

This Settlement applies to people in Nova Scotia who were eligible for disability services under the Social Assistance Act through the Disability Support Program but were put on waitlists for those services or placed in Institutions, Nursing Homes, or Hospitals between April 1, 1998, and August 20, 2025.

To help the community understand this opportunity for restitution, Bonny Lea Farm is hosting an information session on September 16 from 2:00-3:00pm for any one who may have been on a waitlist for disability services between 1998 and 2025.

To learn more about the settlement and claim process click here: [NS Waitlist Settlement](https://www.bonnyleafarm.ca/ns-waitlist-settlement)

Thank you for being a valued supporter of inclusive communities and social change.

Together, we are building a stronger, more equitable future for people with disabilities.



Our 100% cotton wipers are popular with local businesses and provide meaningful work for participants. We had such a great time hosting the Chester's Got More Talent Benefit concert in May—Thank you to all who shared their talents and who came to enjoy the afternoon. Our volunteers pulled off another fantastic Claws for a Cause Lobster Fundraiser. Participants engage in many activities including art, music, animal therapy, in addition to learning new skills. We loved seeing everyone at our Community BBQ at Picnic in the Park in July. Many thanks to the Chester Volunteer Fire Department for hosting a tour and the opportunity to learn about fire fighting. We have many community friends who enrich the lives of participants by sharing their passions—one of them is incubating monarchs. Sometimes it's the "little things" that make someone's day—playing cards in a quiet space or enjoying a rocking chair. We held our very own Canada Day parade complete with a pony! We found a turtle and released it in a less busy spot on our property. We are grateful for the gift of a number of beautiful hand made quilts that will bring comfort to participants.



Mark Your Calendar!

September 16 @ 2:00pm Information session: Disability Support Class Action Settlement

September 20

Annual Benefit Golf Tournament

You can make a big impact today & tomorrow. For more visit bonnyleafarm.ca/ways-to-give/

CRA Charitable #11915 8459 RR0001

For our American Donors: IRS # 23 728 3520

