



### **Historical & Current Information – updated November 2013**

Valley Integration to Active Living Society, (Vital Society), was based on a model designed between 1989 and 1991. This model provided support to dual diagnosis clients with challenging behaviors who had experienced difficulty living in their communities. Some of our residents had experience difficulty with the legal/correction systems. Their dual diagnosis resulted in attempted treatment in a variety of settings that had produced little effect.

Service providers with conventional service models were unwilling to continue to support them, resulting in the residents spending most of their time in institutions such as Glendale Lodge and Riverview Hospital. With the closure of the institutions, there was a need for alternate care models to provide a stable community placement for these individuals. The model was designed on the aspects of institutional care that was most effective, modifying it to work in a community setting.

The Ministry of Social Services and Housing, with some hesitation, accepted the idea of trying the model on an experimental basis. A contract was signed and a Board of Directors established to operate the Society.

#### **Residential**

Vital Society signed a contract for a 4 person home on Wharncliffe in September of 1991.

A 4 person home was constructed on Stamps Road and was completed in February 1992. The home opened in March 1992. Within 6 months, it was obvious that the model was working quite well and was successful beyond anyone's hopes. While demonstrating the challenging behaviors periodically, the men were enjoying the most stable period of their lives.

Due to the success of the model, the Ministry approached Vital Society in late 1993 to consider opening another home of similar design. In 1994 a 3 person home was opened on Westholme Road.

In 1997, a replacement home for Wharncliffe was built on the Westholme site and was named Abbott House in honour of a resident who had passed away at Wharncliffe Road. This home was purpose built for wheelchair accessibility and specialized equipment.

Stamps, and Westholme were expanded to 5 person homes in 2003. All residents were older males. In 2013, Stamps has 4 residents and Westholme has 5.

In May 2007, a fourth residence was opened on Miller Road to accommodate our first female resident. A second male resident was added to this home. These two residents were in their early twenties. As of June 2013, Miller had 3 individuals residing in the home full-time.



In 2009, Abbott House was expanded to a 5 person home. One individual moved to Stamps Road and two young male residents were accommodated. One of the Stamps Road residents moved into a home sharing situation directly contracted with Community Living BC. In July 2013, Abbott had an individual pass away and there is one available space in the home.

A home was purchased by the Society on Marchmont Road to replace the Miller Road rental and to allow the Society to expand its model of service with its first semi-independent living apartment support program. A 40 year old female resident was accommodated in the upstairs apartment until she moved out in June 2013 to reside with her fiancée in another community.

In 2010, a second resident at Stamps Road moved into a home sharing situation contracted with Vital Society and the Society became a Home Sharing Agency. Another male resident was accommodated at Miller/Marchmont in a semi detached bachelor suite until his move to a home sharing situation. Stamps gained another individual in 2012 and 2013 – the home is now full.

In 2012, Miller/Marchmont had an additional supported suite in place for crisis placements. Community Living BC had 3 individuals temporarily access this home. The plan is to secure a home that is available for crisis placements and respite, separate from all the other homes.

In 2011, home sharing services increased dramatically. Ten caregivers from Community Living BC elected to transfer to our agency. As of April 2013, our home sharing program was funded for 25 individuals.

On June 30, 2013, the Society expanded to the Comox Valley. We opened a home in Cumberland serving two young men. We provide residential for both individuals, and community inclusion for the other. In the mid November of 2013, we are relocating to a permanent home in the Comox Valley. CLBC and BC Housing purchased the home and are renovating it to meet Licensing regulations.

## **Non-residential**

The Wood Project is in a state of change as the individuals involved began a Cooperative (Working Together Co-operative) in December 2011. The project continues to provide customized employment for two of our residents and 3 participants from the community. The primary focus of the project is to split, deliver and stack firewood to people in the community. Other work activities are fencing, clean up services and lawn maintenance.

All funds generated by this project are paid to the participants and utilized to maintain the equipment and vehicles. A portion of the proceeds were used to 'give back' to the community through projects such as the school lunch program, the Bamfield school field trip and soccer programs. The program has operated at a deficit for two fiscal years and has been unable to



## Valley Integration to Active Living Society (V.I.T.A.L.S.)

---

give back to the community. We have initiated contact with CLBC to discuss the Employment Initiative in order to strengthen the program and add new members.

The 5 in-home day programs of Abbott, Westholme, Stamps, Comox, and Miller/Marchmont are focused on Community Inclusion and citizenship through social, recreational, employment and skill development. Activities include music, gym, shopping, volunteering, paid employment and developing the Stamps and Westholme/Abbott gardens.

In 2011, we began providing a community inclusion for 3 individuals out of the Government Street building. In June of 2013, we were providing service to 4 individuals. Two individuals have moved to different programs and as of November 5, 2013, this program now provides programming for 2 individuals whom are active in community and have paid employment.