

Autism Connections Fredericton  
Annual General Meeting  
Executive Director Report 2020 - 2021

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## Highlights

### **Nomination**

Autism Connections Fredericton is one of three finalists for the Fredericton Chamber of Commerce “Business of Excellence” award for 2021. The “Business of Excellence Award” is in recognition of an innovative business that “has demonstrated professional integrity, excellence in customer service, success through innovation and a commitment to the community”. The recipients of the award is scheduled to be announced in February 2022.

### **Spares and Strikes**

Our annual Bowl-a-Thon raised \$31,000 this fall.

### **Drive-by Santa**

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

### **Vulnerable Persons Registry (VPR)**

ACF is proud to have started a partnership with the Fredericton Police Force through the creation of the VPR.

### **Adult Employment Services**

Employment Counselling and an Employment Support Group.

## **Challenges, Program changes, and Developments**

In 2021, we met with challenges as we continued to navigate service provision and Covid-19 to ensure the safety of staff and families. We have had to make some tough decisions, such as, holding the Superhero Walk virtually, and cancelling some of our smaller, more intimate events and activities. Out of the ashes, we have also had some great success.

Last spring we introduced adult employment support programs as a results of government initiatives that stemmed from the pandemic and allowed us to reach a little further into our community and provided supports not previously available at Autism Connections. It was in partnership with Autism Nova Scotia we welcomed a Ready, Willing, and Able Autism Outreach Coordinator. This position was not sustainable because a gap in services left many of our adults unprepared to sustain and maintain a job but it is also how we started the initiative to continue the path. In 2022, we will be submitting a proposal to bridge the gap and created a program that will build a student centered blueprint to be activated post-secondary.

In addition, a new position was created at ACF and we hired an Employment Counsellor who facilitates two cohorts of Career Quest. One is a Ready, Willing, and Able cohort which caters to the Fredericton area and the other is an Atlantic Autism Support Employment Network (AASEN) cohort which offers employment support services to the rest of NB. It is also through these initiatives that ACF has been able to offer its first first-voice cofacilitated Employment Support Group and is virtually available to the entirety of NB.

Our Superhero Walk/Run was virtual due to Covid. ACF adapted by hosting it live stream and we interacted with participants by engaging in games, draws, and live music. It was wonderful that our participants shared pictures and videos of their walk/run that we were able to share during the live event. The fundraiser made approximately \$10,000. Camp Marvel hosted campers during the months of July and August. Our campers experiences one-on-one support, had daily trips to play at the park, and each day was met with new activities and experiences.

In the fall, we cemented a relationship with Social Development in which we our Skills Enrichment Program has been recognized as a referable and fundable program. This relationship has become an inlet for our families who work with Social Development to access the program without finances being a barrier and has given Social Development an option for their individuals seeking behavioural support, skill acquisition and social skills groups.

Over the course of the year, through Michael Elliot (Board Member), we fostered a stronger relationship with 5CSB Gagetown and with their help, our Christmas tradition became something unique, innovative, and festive with our Drive-by-Santa. 5CSB delivered Santa in an armored vehicle and a convoy of first responders vehicles. Visitors were greeted by Christmas lights, decorations and carolers who brought energy and spirit. Each child delivered their letter to one of Santa's solidier helpers and each response letter was personalized. Out of their vehicle window, visitors could see the lights of both Fredericton police and the RCMP vehicles, a fire truck with its ladder boomed into the sky, and a couple of armored vehicles, complete with a personalized one-on-one visit with Santa.

Over the past year we have been making gains as an organization. We have a new website, our Full Stack Developer has built the Membership Program platform and we are actively digitizing our resource manual. Our Membership Program will be launched in 2022 and will offer special promotions, preferred access to our programs/events and will allow our members to have representative opportunities. Each family will have a QR code to track program/event attendance data beneficial in applying for grants or government support to further expand our support and services.

## Programs of 2021

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.	The students are currently providing approximately 242 hours of direct support across 24 clients.
Employment Support Group	An online employment discussion led by first-voice concerning employment challenges, 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.	We have engaged 9 individuals over the year and 4 are currently actively participating 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 tailoring cover letters and resumes.	In 2021 we supported 9 individuals reaching as far as St. Stephens.
Gymnastics	Is being offered to children ages 5-7. The program works on agility and balance using fun games. In addition to working on floor exercises, beam skills, jumps, and stretches.	In 2021 we had 4 participants and expect to host an additional 2 classes this 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 approximately 40 participants this past year.
Parent/Caregiver Support Group	Provides a safe, non-judgmental space, for individuals to discuss the challenges and barrier of supporting someone on the spectrum. Some topics included sleeping issues, Vulnerable Persons Registry with the Fredericton Police and had an AIDE Canada presentation.	This group is on hold at the moment due to Covid-19.

## 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 Virtual Superhero Walk raised over \$10,000. This year's Superhero walk was once again held virtually.
Spares and Strikes Bowl-a-Thon	We had 12 teams participate and raise money for our annual Bowl-a-Thon which was an overwhelming huge success and raised \$31,000.

Community Engagement	Details
Drive-by-Santa	This year's Drive-By Santa was a great event thanks to 5CSB Gagetown, Fairstone Financial ~ Prospect St. ( Monetary sponsor \$2000), the Fredericton Police Force, the Fredericton RCMP, and the FHS ladies Black Kats hockey team. 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.

## Partnerships of 2021

### **Autism Nova Scotia**

Allows us to offer Atlantic region programs.

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

### **Working New Brunswick**

ACF mentors recent graduates in the field of employment to gain experience working with persons with Autism and provide additional resources to our members.

### **Educational Institutes**

Partnered with the University of New Brunswick, ACF offered a experiential learning placement for the Applied Behaviour Analysis certificate students, the faculty of arts internship, the faculty of business and the Resonance College. In addition, we partnered with St. Thomas University to provide internship placements and hosted an Oulton college student's on-the-job training experience.

### **Community Partnerships**

- 5CBS Gagetown
- Military Family Resource Centre (MFRC)
- Autism Intervention Services (AIS)
- OPAL Family Services
- Fredericton Playhouse
- Fredericton Transit

### **Grant Partnerships**

- Windsor Foundation
- Post Education Training and Labour (PETL)
- United Way
- New Brunswick Children's Foundation
- Canadian Tire Jump Start Charities
- 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)
- Ready Willing and Able

## Goals for 2022

### **Transition Pilot**

A proposal to facilitate a program for ~ 8-10 students from grades 9-12 that is student focused in developing post-secondary and life goals is in the works and expected to be delivered in September.

### **Touch-a-...**

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

### **First Responder Training**

Access funding to create an autism specific training for first responders.

### **Promotional Video**

Create a promotional video to highlight Autism Connections and the services and events we provide to promote community awareness.

### **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.

## Acknowledgements

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 supports for families, individuals and service providers with an awesome team!

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.



Shannon O'Brien

Executive Director  
Autism Connections Fredericton