

# STEPS Forward

## INCLUSIVE POST SECONDARY EDUCATION AND CO-OP EMPLOYMENT

*Through inclusive post-secondary education and co-op employment young adults with developmental disabilities are redefining their future.*

Fall Newsletter

Issue N° 02 — 2008

### UBC /ECU

Students graduate from the University of British Columbia and Emily Carr University after completing their studies.....

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### UVic

In spite of closures due to a campus strike, students are successful in finding paid, off-campus jobs during the summer.....

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### UBC - Okanagan

STEPS Forward has now been in Kelowna for a year, and community interest has grown..

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### Reflections

Thank you Hon. M. Coell for your support and leadership.....

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### STEPS Co-op Employment

Alumni are employed in long term jobs they found, or created, while they were still completing their studies.....

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### Calendar - AGM

Jan 10th - 2pm.

Guest Speaker from PLAN will provide insight into the new Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP). We encourage everyone interested to attend....

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### Our Supporters

We gratefully acknowledge the support of individuals and organizations helping us promote a new vision of citizenship for adults with developmental disabilities....

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## Congratulations to the New Graduates

Along with the rest of the world, STEPS Forward is at a momentous point in its own history.

We now have good reason to be optimistic about the future. In the spring, our first four graduates crossed the stage in convocations at UBC Vancouver and Emily Carr. These students were not set apart from their peers in any way, but rather marched in the graduation procession in alphabetical order along with hundreds of other undergraduates. Their participation in the process was absolutely seamless and unremarkable. Unremarkability has for several years been the goal of STEPS Forward and it has been thrilling to see our students convocate as peers that are not "special" or different. Furthermore, these graduates are already launched in careers they nurtured during their campus and co-op experiences over the previous 5 years. We now have evidence that our unique approach to inclusion is working.

New students are following in the footsteps of the grads and are taking courses in new areas

and participating in campus life in different ways. This term one student is living independently in residence at UBC.

We continue to get requests from communities all around British Columbia for initiatives in inclusive post-secondary education at local colleges or universities, including North Island College, Camosun, UNBC, Langara, Douglas and Malaspina. Requests come from a variety of people - potential students, families, high school teachers, college or university administrators, CLBC facilitators, and local associations of community living. We have presented our vision and work to many different audiences with resounding approval. Most recently we presented at the Campbell Collaboration, an international scholarly body that reviews research evidence for policy purposes.

To the graduates, I want to say congratulations for your individual achievements as students. For each of you, university has meant something different. But to all of you, it has meant growth. To the Board, I want to say thank you for your steering of this initiative since its inception. It has hardly been an easy course. And to our amazing staff Jim, Teri, Heather, Jessica, Jen, Tiffany, Eva, our new development officer Hales and especially Tamara --- a profound thanks. It is a job like no other. Both on the front lines and in the background they work tirelessly, creatively and reflectively.

We are elated with all of these accomplishments. Is it enough? Of course not. Inclusion is not straightforward. Sometimes it does not even look like the right thing. For people with developmental disabilities, society has long been a cold, unwelcoming or patronizing place. People have had lives where they were heartbreakingly lonely and never given the opportunity to realize their potential. We are convinced that inclusive post secondary education is one part of a struggle to change this society. It is a mammoth task fuelled by hope, perseverance and vision. There is no doubt that we can do it.

Judith Mosoff,  
President



University of British Columbia  
Convocation 2008

# Lower Mainland

University of British Columbia  
Emily Carr University

It has been an action-packed several months here at STEPS Campus Vancouver. We have had the pleasure of attending convocation in May for four graduating students – the first to complete their studies with STEPS' support! Three new students have also begun their studies in Vancouver – two new students at UBC and one new student at Emily Carr University. We also welcomed back a familiar face in Eva Cheng who is lending her expertise in employment through STEPS Cop.

A busy summer included supporting students at positions with HomeSense, Rogers Video, CBC, a local Native Arts store, and teaching art courses to children at local community centres. One student also returned from his first visit to Europe, exploring many of the locales described in his Art History courses, and then began volunteering at a local SPCA to explore his interest in working with animals

At Emily Carr, after participating in a busy two-day, new student orientation, the new student is taking a first year English course as well as a course on Creative Process. He is actively participating in group projects and one of his instructors reports that the student "is a bright, delightful student who attends regularly, contributes, and shows interest in discussions. I enjoy having him in class. He even helps me when my laptop doesn't work!"

At UBC, the two new students also participated in Imagine UBC – orientation and welcome day for new UBC students. They are now exploring their first taste of undergraduate studies by studying Political Science, Women's Studies, Anthropology and Canadian History. Our returning student is furthering his interest in international relations by taking a course in Global Politics and is also expanding his horizons through a Family Studies course. Students are actively participating in all aspects of the classes, with one student already having completed his class presentation in Political Science, and another preparing her presentation on the genocide in Rwanda. Mid-term examinations are almost complete for all of the students and they are also actively working on completing term papers with subjects ranging from "Ethnocentricity in Anthropology" to "the Political Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes." One student has also completed a research project on the Sexual Assault Support Centre on UBC. Students are also engaging in extracurricular activities such as the NDP club, the Film Club and the Judo Club.

STEPS is also providing transition support to students in their post-graduate employment. One graduate is continuing her job at CBC and is eager to expand her responsibilities. Her employer says that she is an excellent employee. One graduate, while continuing her employment, has also found a supportive community in a local art studio that is encouraging her to continue to further her talents. STEPS is also supporting several students to explore self-employment options.

We are also in the process of interviewing interested young adults with developmental disabilities who would like to start in January 2009. If you are interested, or know someone who would like more information please contact me at 604 822 1644.

Jim Jo,  
Coordinator

# Vancouver Island

University of Victoria

The Fall of 2008 has held some new challenges for the staff and students at UVic. With the student union building workers on strike, we have had to abandon many of our comfort zones to find new places to work and hang out on campus. This has been frustrating, especially on rainy days when the cafeterias and coffee shops are overfull, but it has also provided an incentive to try out some new spaces and activities.

We had a busy summer facilitating employment as 4 of the 5 returning students were employed in paid positions. A 4<sup>th</sup> year Education student was hired on at 2 local recreations centers as an assistant camp leader, as well as a UVic Vikes assistant coach at volleyball camp. The weeks when she worked all three jobs were intense but it offered some great insight into other possible employment roles that she can explore. The student really grew in her understanding of her potential as a teacher and leader over the past year and we can see how her university experiences have contributed to new expectations and opportunities that she is creating for herself. She will be studying Coaching Studies and participating in and Elementary School Experience Seminar this fall. She is also choosing to participate in the Education Department Student Association and continues to be active in fitness classes on campus. The student hopes to participate in graduation ceremonies through the Education department in the spring.

A Social Work student worked in the new Music and Media Commons at the UVic library this summer. The employer demonstrated a

true understanding and commitment to inclusive employment which made for a really positive experience for everyone involved. CanAssist collaborated with the student and employer to create some tools and technology that allowed the student to take on new roles and responsibilities and to perform her duties with more ease. The employer has invited the student to return to the workplace as further projects become available. This student is presently studying Law and Social Services as well as a class in Indigenous Issues and Human Services.

A sciences student was employed at a local clothing retailer over the summer and, while this job was not exactly in her field of study, it gave her an opportunity to try out some new roles, gain confidence in her skills, and to work with other people in her age group. This same student tried out a job early in this school year at the UVic Medical Centre and may return to this at a later time when she has had more opportunity to try out some of these roles in a quieter and friendlier environment. To that end she has volunteered at the Island Sexual Health Society and will work as an assistant to the nurses, doctors, and receptionists in the space. There are many exciting roles available to her here and it is exciting to see her using her UVic education - she has studied with a specific interest in the medical field - to forward her career goals. The student has chosen Health Psychology and a course in Interpersonal Communication for the fall.



A Child and Youth Care student continued in employment as a dance instructor through local dance schools. This is a valued role for him and he has been much in demand. This work continues throughout the school year and he is choosing courses in Child and Youth Care and Indigenous Arts this fall with thought as to how he can expand on these skills to create new paid roles for himself.

A Psychology student has chosen Adult Development and Aging as her area of interest this semester. She has also chosen to participate as a volunteer and will be starting a 'button' making business. She has volunteered her time to create buttons for the UVic Women's Centre, UVic Pride, and the UVic Anti-Violence Project. She will be invited to participate in activities and displays where

the buttons will be sold in support of the work of these organizations. The student will think about how this could become paid work in the future and has explored some other options this fall including meeting with a local private investigator to learn what roles this person has in her work. The student has an interest in psychology, women's health, and forensics and we will spend time thinking together about future possibilities in these fields.

The UVic staff will be undergoing some temporary changes over the next year. Currently Jessica has taken a semester leave to finish her social work degree. Jen and Heather will work full-time until the winter break. In January Jen and Jessica will both work full-time while Heather is on maternity leave until mid 2009. Jen will continue in her invaluable role as full-time facilitator throughout this period.

We have had some interest in STEPS Forward providing support services to potential students at North Island University as well as at Camosun College. We will be investigating these possibilities over the next year or two.

Heather Carley  
Jessica Humphrey,  
Co-ordinators

## Okanagan

### UBC – Okanagan (Kelowna)

STEPS Forward Inclusive Post-Secondary Education Society has now been in Kelowna for a year, and community interest in what we do has grown. In fact, there is a new student that started at UBC Okanagan in September and there is potential of a third student starting in January.



STEPS Forward currently supports two students at UBC Okanagan and this September to December term has been very successful! Students have taken part in a number of courses and campus events.

While the second year student continues to pursue studies under the Faculty of Arts, the

new student is pursuing his studies under the Faculty of Creative and Critical Studies.

Courses being taken during this term are:

- Anthropology: Archaeology of the Americas
- Art History: Art in Canada, 1900-1970
- History: History of Western Civilization, 1450-1789
- Visual Arts: Drawing and Two-Dimensional Art Practices I

Both students are enjoying these courses. It has been very fortunate to have such great support from all of these professors; in fact support this year has been tremendous!

As for campus life, a number of opportunities have arisen for both students. In fact, there appears to be more campus activities on campus this year than compared to last year! The new student, for example, attended CREATE in September, which is UBC Okanagan's event for first year students. This student also attended the First Year Visual Arts Orientation, in which he won some art supplies. There have also been some Fine Art Exhibits that the student has viewed. The second year student attended the Course Union / Club Day event, in which he decided to continue to be a part of the Anthropology Course Union. Other activities attended by this student included the Weight Room Open House, in which the student has a keen interest in working out and will be doing so very soon.

A significant development this term has been that both students have been quite independent while on campus. Both have shown that they are quite capable in seeking out opportunities, such as going to class early to talk to students before class, studying in the library, and watching movies in the pub on their lunch break.

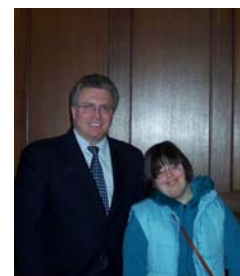
Students are in the process of finalizing this term, and will be preparing for Term Two. A unique opportunity has arisen for one of the students, who may take a course in Anthropology that will involve a laboratory component, where students will experience hands-on fieldwork.

I have also been in contact with community organizations and to promote the work of STEPS Forward. I had the chance to attend a community living meeting for Okanagan families through CLBC and the Family Leadership program, which was an opportunity to understand issues and priorities for people in this area. I look forward to venturing out more into the community to network and promote the values of STEPS Forward.

Tiffany Thesen-Yee,  
Coordinator

## Reflections

We have, with great expectation, seen the first fully-included students complete their studies and move on to employment and activities in the community. I would like to take this moment to especially thank the Minister of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, Honourable Murray Coell, for his leadership and support in making this vision a reality. In 2006 Hon. M Coell welcomed students from the University of British Columbia, the University of Victoria and the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design to the Legislative Assembly. The students and families were thrilled with this formal recognition of their work and accomplishments.



One of the joys of my job is to see how the future unfolds in ways we had not predicted when we started. One example is the concerns we had about long-term employment support and what would happen when someone lost their job. Instead we are being asked, not for support to find new jobs, but are facing questions such as now that I have been in this job for a while I want a promotion and "I want to learn how to do more things so I don't get bored". Employers are enthusiastically responding and their employees, with support from STEPS Forward are learning new components of their jobs to get that promotion. I am also finding that I am inspired by the students who are not following the predicted path such as one student who dropped out because she had gained the confidence and skill to be the manager of her own personal care instead of having to hire someone else to do that. She is reveling in the independence of managing her own life. Another student, one of the graduates, has decided that he is not finished with his yearning for learning and while we cannot support students after graduation, he has enrolled himself in continuing education courses in cooking and Italian. He found, enrolled and is taking these courses completely on his own and by all accounts is successful in them.

The STEPS Forward Board is currently putting the finishing touches on our next 3-year plan and will be presenting it at our upcoming AGM. I encourage you to participate in the vision by attending our AGM and providing us with your insight and suggestions.

Tamara Hurtado,  
Executive Director

# STEPS Co-op Employment

As an employment facilitator who has been working with STEPS Co-op for a number of years, I have noticed an attitude shift in the community and employers about the idea of "inclusive employment". Various studies have shown persons with developmental disabilities are capable of performing complex and systematic tasks with appropriate support in place. These individuals' abilities in performing such tasks and dedication to the work environment add value to business by reducing high turnover rates in positions. Hiring individuals with developmental disabilities maximize a business' staffing resources. Employers who have participated in the STEPS Co-op initiative have seen and reaped the benefits of having young adults with development disabilities on their team. Employers and colleagues grow and develop not only on an organizational level, but also on a personal level.

## Background

STEPS Co-op initiated in January 2004 to promote an inclusive environment in the workplace for young adults with intellectual disabilities. This initiative is in line with STEPS Forward's mission to create the same possibility for young adults with intellectual disabilities as their non-disabled peers.

## Past and Present

In 2004-2007, young adults participating in the STEPS campus program at UBC and Emily Carr found summer employment through STEPS Co-op network of employers. Since the program's launch in 2004, there has been a steady growth in the number of students finding jobs and the number of jobs being retained. Below is a graph that depicts the development of the program in BC. Starting in 2003, with students graduating from the STEPS campus program, co-op staff started to support our young adults in finding permanent employment and exploring career directions. Two of our alumni successfully found permanent employment during their studies. Some of the students approaching their graduation are exploring the option of self-employment and setting up their own businesses. A self-employment package is being put together to support students interested in starting their own businesses.

## Job Profiles

One student has been working at Hill's Native Art since July 2005. She assists customers in locating merchandise. In the words of the Marketing Manager at Hill's:

"She has a candid mind and an excellent sense of humor. She also has a solid grasp of consumer motivation and impulse and yet remains untouched by cynicism or mistrust. She is optimistic, clever, brave, and resourceful and an asset to the gallery".

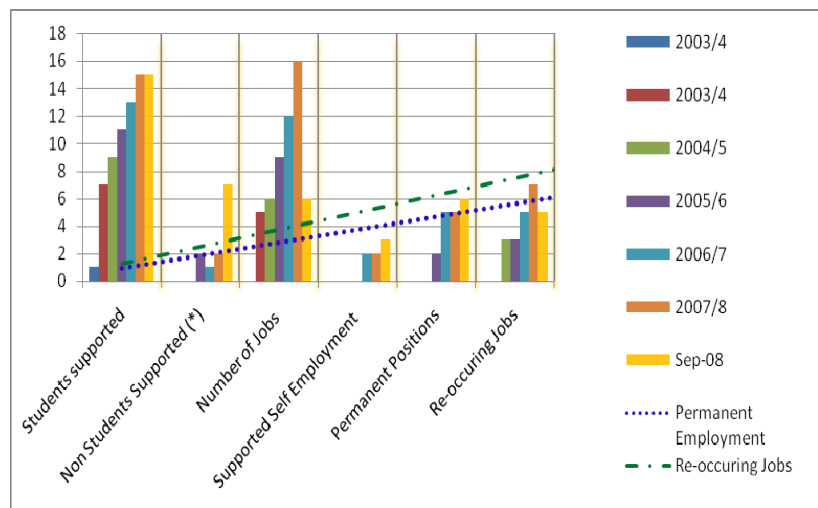
In 2008, the student graduated from Emily Carr University. Recently, she rented a share-space at a local art gallery to showcase her works and to connect with the art community.

Another student graduated from Emily Carr University this year as well. Over the past year, she put together a series of lesson plans and taught art to children at Renfrew Community Centre. Soon after launching her "Creative Kids" art program at Renfrew, she brought her program to the West Richmond Community Centre. Children and parents have enjoyed her creative and welcoming presence during classes. Currently she continues to run the "Creative Kids" program in the two community centres. She is looking to expand her program to other local community centres.

Two students graduated from UBC in June 2008. Last September, one student began working with the Canadian Broadcasting Centre (CBC) two days a week. She currently works in the music library that contains 60,000 CDs in the Radio department. Her diligence, dedication and commitment to her job is highly valued by staff. The Superintendent in Music Services has an extremely positive experience working with her. He is grateful to have assistance in his workload, and his perception towards working with persons with developmental disabilities has completely shifted through this experience.

As students graduate, some alumni have expressed an interest in starting their own businesses and becoming self-employed. Staff are working with these individuals and their family members to create a self-employment package that is easy to use for anyone who wishes to become self-employed. The package will contain templates and resources that aim to facilitate individuals to develop focused business ideas and to gain a realistic picture in running their businesses.

Eva Cheng,  
Co-ordinator



2004 - 2008 STEPS Co-op Employment Trends

# Calendar

2008

## New Student Applications - November

STEPS Forward has openings to support one new student at UBC and one new student at UVic - both starting in January 2009.

Staff will be meeting with prospective students on campus in November.

Please contact:

Heather Carley or Jessica Humphrey in Victoria at:

250 884 1297 / [steps-uvic@shaw.ca](mailto:steps-uvic@shaw.ca)

or

Jim Jo in Vancouver at:

604 822 1644 / [jjo@steps-forward.org](mailto:jjo@steps-forward.org)

2009

## STEPS Forward ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

January 10<sup>th</sup> 2009 - 2PM  
2150 Maple Street, Vancouver

(Please visit our website at

[www.steps-forward.org](http://www.steps-forward.org) for directions)

# Sustaining Our Future

Did you know that STEPS Forward Inclusive Post Secondary Education Society helped support 18 young adults with developmental disabilities attain their dreams?

Now you too can support STEPS Forward and ensure financial sustainability for the future. Our plan is to focus on new sources of revenue, diversifying our funding sources and finding a different way of raising funds. We now know that we need to approach the different generations differently. While Generation X (1967-1980) is considered reactive, self-reliant and gives modestly, the Boomers (1947-1966) are considered idealistic, individualistic and control their giving. STEPS-Forward urges individuals, donors, foundations, corporations, all levels of government and community organizations to make an investment in the future of our young adults with development disabilities and ensure STEPS-Forward's ability to sustain the initiatives already in place, to respond with new programs, to provide opportunities for growth, and to create additional capacity.

**Ways of Giving:** There are various ways to support STEPS-Forward. Whether you are interested in making a one - time gift of cash, a pledged gift, a matched gift, a life-time legacy gift, or a gift in kind, or you wish to set up a student scholarship or bursary, contribute through monthly giving, or establish corporate sponsorship, our Development Office can help you make the right choice for you or your company. Your ideas are always welcomed.

STEPS-Forward offers the following suggestions as examples on how you might participate and make a difference to young adults with development disabilities and to the future of STEPS-Forward Inclusive Post Secondary Education.

**Major Giving:** The fund development for major gifts focuses on those gifts that are significantly larger than annual support gifts. These major gifts support a special program, scholarship, or bursary. Individuals giving their own money have been the primary source of major gifts, although not the only source of major gifts. Corporations, foundations and community organizations can also play an important role in major giving. Major gifts can be cash donations, a pledged gift over years, a planned gift or a Gift-in-Kind.

**Matching funds:** We encourage leveraging of major gifts through matching funds. Check with your employer to see if they have a matching gift program. In this way, you could double your gift.

**Scholarship and Bursary Funds:** Establishing Scholarship and Bursary Funds provide scholarships and financial support to students who qualify.

**Monthly Giving:** You can designate a fixed monthly donation for a year or more to support our programs. This can be arranged through automatic withdrawal from your bank account or through electronic funds transfer.

**Sponsorship:** Corporate sponsorship opportunities are available. You may sponsor self - employment kits for students completing their studies at colleges and universities and who are getting ready to enter the work force.

**Planned Giving And Leave A Legacy:** Planned Giving or Leave a Legacy is charitable giving coordinated with your overall financial and estate plan and is an opportunity to make a well - planned gift to STEPS-Forward Inclusive Post Secondary Education. There are several ways to leave a legacy. If you are interested in Planned Giving, our Development Office will work with you and your advisors to work out the best plan, allowing you to provide for yourself and your family while fulfilling your charitable intentions. All of the following methods on Planned Giving provide for considerable flexibility in planning your estate to guarantee income and preserve capital while minimizing income and estate tax. Various gift options are available such as: Bequests and Wills, Charitable Remainder Trusts (CRT), Endowment Funds, Insured Annuities, Life Insurance, RRSP and RRIF Assets, Appreciated Securities and Gifts-in-Kind of tangible property, fine art work, jewelry or equipment.

If you would like additional information on the varied gift options, please contact me at STEPS-Forward:

2150 Maple Street, Vancouver, BC, V6J 3T3.  
604 782 1382 or [hhjones@steps-forward.org](mailto:hhjones@steps-forward.org)

Hales Jones, Development Officer

*STEPS-Forward Inclusive Post Secondary Education Society respects and adheres to the legislated privacy requirements.*

*We do not trade, sell or rent out any names or personal information.*

*If you would like you name added or removed from our mailing list, please e-mail us at [subscribe@steps-forward.org](mailto:subscribe@steps-forward.org)*

**A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO THOSE WHO HAVE MADE THIS DREAM A REALITY:**

Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development



Canadian Council on Learning  
Conseil Canadien sur l'Apprentissage



Service  
Canada  
Youth Employment Program



VANCOUVER  
FOUNDATION



Kampier Chan  
Dr. Terry Engel  
Barbara Laird  
Judith Mosoff  
Stephanie Phillips  
Jim Russell  
ARIA Microboard

