

KINDALE DEVELOPMENTAL ASSOCIATION: “BUILDING COMMUNITY”

Kindale Developmental Association is a non-profit society that provides a wide range of services to people with developmental and other disabilities throughout the North Okanagan. It began in Armstrong in 1959 as a school for children with special needs that had no access to public education. The original school was built by volunteers from the Kinsmen and Lion's Clubs who raised funds and worked evenings and weekends to see it completed. This spirit of 'building community' is an integral part of Kindale's history, philosophy and values.

Over the past 50 years Kindale has grown into a large and diverse organization with over 130 employees. It now operates four residential homes - 3 in Armstrong and 1 in Vernon - and provides a variety of Community Living options through Bechtold Centre and Independent Generation in Armstrong, and Mainstreet Connections and Seaton Centre in Vernon. It also operates a successful thrift store in Armstrong that is staffed by volunteers from the community.

People with developmental and other disabilities have a long history of institutionalization and segregation. To help counter this, Kindale has increasingly focussed on initiatives that maximize community participation and inclusion. For example:

- Many of our services are now delivered through store front locations such as Mainstreet Connection in Vernon and Independent Generation in Armstrong. Wherever possible activities take place in the wider community.
- Through our partnership with Community Recreational Initiatives Society (CRIS) people with disabilities in the North Okanagan now have a wonderful opportunity to engage in outdoor activities which would have been considered impossible in the past. Using adaptive technologies and specialized equipment, enthusiastic volunteers assist those with even severe impairments to enjoy such activities as hiking, camping, kayaking, cycling and skiing. (See the CRIS website for more information and inspirational pictures and video clips www.adaptiveadventures.ca)
- Since 2007 Kindale's Customized Employment Program has supported over 30 people with disabilities to find full and part time paid positions with local employers. Some of these success stories are featured in a wonderful short film produced by CHBC called 'Open Your Eyes'. Kindale is also active in the Rotary Employment Partnership. Through this partnership, Rotarians provide employment in their businesses and Community Living agencies like Kindale provide personalized supports. Award winning Vernon film maker and Rotarian Jim Elderton created a short documentary film which highlights this successful partnership. Both of these films can be viewed on the Kindale website www.kindale.net/media.html

Kindale has now become very involved in helping to provide affordable housing in the North Okanagan. Access to quality, safe and affordable housing is essential for those with disabilities who wish to live more independently in the community and many other individuals and families with low or fixed incomes have urgent housing needs as well. Kindale is very pleased to have been part of the Under One Roof initiative with the Vernon and District Community Land Trust, Habit for Humanity and many other community partners and businesses such as Heartwood Homes. We look forward to further projects and community partnerships that address this vital need.

For more information about Kindale and the services it provides please visit our website at www.kindale.net