

# Gastown Vocational News

SUMMER 2011  
EDITION

Brought to you by Gastown Vocational Services

## Employer Recognition Event 2011 a Hit!



### *GVS Employer Partners Award Recipients – Gathered in the Spotlight*

Gastown Vocational Services recognized and honored employers who have assisted GVS clients in achieving their employment goals at the 2011 Employer Recognition Event. This year's awards ceremony was held at the Paetzold Auditorium at Vancouver General Hospital, and included a special performance of the play "What's Normal?" written by GVS client Mary F. Sousa (see story on page 2). Employers from many facets of the community were in attendance.

Award recipients included employers who had long standing relationships with GVS such as Restore, The Vancouver Aquarium, Mintage, Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, Western Wilderness Society and the YMCA Thrift Store plus many new employers such as Safeway, Coggs, 411 Seniors Centre, Best Haircutters, and Vancouver Native Health. All of these employers have significantly impacted the recovery of GVS clients by providing volunteer placements, work experience placements, and part-time or full-time employment.

Last year in partnership with employers, GVS found 87 full-time or part-time jobs, 60 work experience placements, and 65 volunteer opportunities for clients. The partnership between GVS and community employers is win-win scenario for all concerned.

– Norman Dawson, GVS

Loco Motion's feature play

"WHAT'S NORMAL"  
was a huge success!

See photos below.  
Story on page 2



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## Employer In the Spotlight



**David Millic of Coggs receiving the employer recognition award from Mariella Bozzer and Peter Phillips**

My partner Graciella and I operate Coggs Antique and Furniture located at 4253 East Hastings Street in Burnaby, BC. A shop full of wondrous treasures from days gone by, Coggs Antiques is not just another antiques shop; it is a journey into the area's past that helps illuminate a deeper understanding of our ancestry in a wonderfully dignified way. Our partnership with GVS developed a few years ago when Norman Dawson, a Job Developer at GVS, dropped by with a proposition to place one of his Supported Employment clients who was fascinated with antiques and curios in a work experience placement with us. We met the client and learned about their mental health disability, and discussed how a placement at our store could benefit their self-efficacy while also fulfilling our desire to enhance our community profile. We were absolutely

delighted with the client's performance and have since provided casual part-time employment or volunteer placements to other clients with mental health disabilities.

As our business is very diverse, we were also able to assist in supplying and installing the staging for the premier of the Loco Motion production "What's Normal?" at the 2011 Employer Recognition Awards. Graciella and I were absolutely thrilled and delighted to be presented with a "platinum" employer award at the event.

Please come visit our store or visit us on the internet at

<http://coggsantique.blogspot.com/>

– David Millic, Coggs;  
Norman Dawson, GVS



## "What's Normal?" at GVS

GVS was proud to present the inaugural performance of the Loco Motion production "What's Normal?" at the 2011 GVS Employer Recognition Event. Loco Motion is an entertainment performance company for people with mental health disabilities. The company was initiated as a VCMHS service wide group by GVS Supported Education and Employment program Case Manager, Norman Dawson.

"What's Normal?" is a one act play written by GVS client, Mary F. Sousa. The play is an entertaining, educational, dramatic comedy that takes the audience through the looking glass and into the world of Isabelle, an overtly romantic 29 year old woman with schizophrenia. Her passions and illness



**Actors from left to right, Branwen Willow, Amanda Azzopardi and Frederick Cummings**

take comical twists and turns until her doctor intervenes and sends her delusions into the ether of dreams.

"What's Normal?" was directed by theatre professional Tanja Dixon-Warren of Hoarse Raven Theatre Company. Tanja Dixon-Warren generously volunteered her services and was instrumental in the success of the project. The production was the icing on the cake at GVS Employer Recognition Awards and the cast and crew received a standing ovation by the audience of 120 invited guests. Loco Motion is now providing acting classes for people with mental illness through another VCMHS Service Wide grant.

See [www.loco-motion.ca](http://www.loco-motion.ca)

– Norman Dawson, GVS

## New Tertiary Unit! Forest Edge at UBC

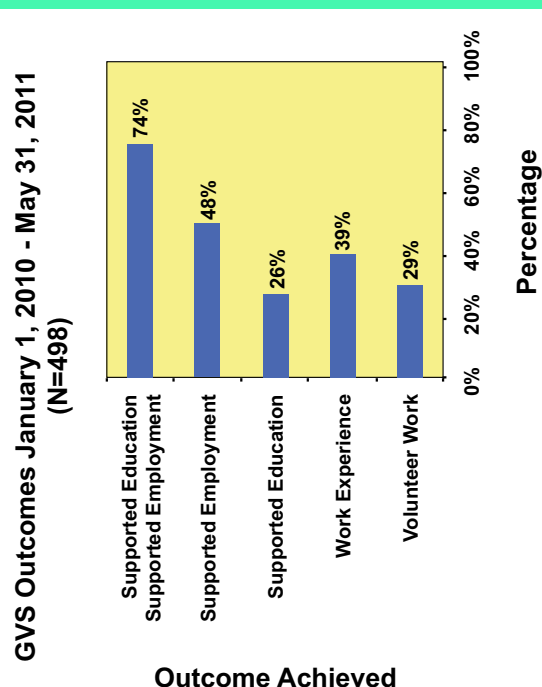
In February 2011, a new 30 bed adult tertiary mental health rehabilitation unit (Forest Edge) opened up in the Detwiller Pavilion at UBC. Forest Edge provides a range of specialized services for adults with serious mental illness. With a focus on psychosocial rehabilitation, the adult tertiary rehabilitation program helps clients regain optimal functioning and quality of life. The goal is to help clients reintegrate back to their home communities with supports in place.

GVS, along with Vancouver Coastal Health, has hired a full-time Job Developer to work with the residents at Forest Edge on their short and long-term volunteer and employment goals. This is one of many services that will contribute to the larger goal of the program. To date, ten of the residents are engaged in volunteering at Forest Edge, one is attending a special education program at Douglas College, and another is doing a summer work experience with Canadian Tire.

Congratulations Forest Edge!

- Leo Gosselin, GVS/Tertiary

## Success Rates for GVS Clients



### FRIENDSHIP

A poem by Rolf Auer  
May 1, 2011

Awakening, fully rested,  
after a long night's sleep.

Aroma of a freshly-brewed cup of  
coffee—goes down smooth.

Crackling of eggs in the frying pan,  
spackling of toast with butter and jam.

Biting into a fresh apple, tasting the sweet juice.

Promise of a beautiful day, a few clouds, mostly sunny.

Weekend again, off for a long refreshing walk,  
then drop into a café to meet—



## Youth Team Grow With Us

Just in time for summer, the Youth and Young Adult Employment and Education team has grown! The team now consists of an Occupational Therapist and two full time Job Developers. With more staff, the waitlist will become shorter and we can plan more services and opportunities for youth clients.

This summer, the Youth Team is hosting three service-wide Money Skills Workshops for Youth. Sessions will be held on July 11th, 18th, and 25th at GVS from 2-4pm. Learn how to manage your money, make your savings grow, and plan for the future!

The youth team has organized two group volunteer days for the summer. The volunteer day at the Vancouver Food Bank was a huge success with 250 food packages put together by GVS youth clients. The Greater Vancouver Food Bank Society distributes to over 25,000 people every week, and relies exclusively on the charity of individuals and organizations willing to donate funds, food and time. The second volunteer day will be an outdoor affair with the Environmental Youth Alliance on July 26th. EYA is an organization focused on youth led initiatives supporting sustainability and healthy communities locally (operating three community gardens) and globally. Volunteering



provides the opportunity to give back to the community, while helping youth to gain work experience, develop new skills, and meet new people.

The Brain Fitness project is also well underway. This cognitive research project is a partnership with the UBC psychology department, Early Psychosis Intervention Unit (EPI) and GVS. Sixteen clients were assessed at UBC, and now attend GVS for computer brain fitness classes twice per week. The GVS and EPI Occupational Therapists facilitate the Cognitive Enhancement group once per week. Youth clients are excited and committed to learn more about their brain and improve their attention and memory.

The Youth and Young Adult Team strives to help clients grow and develop to their full potential, continuing to provide fun and creative opportunities to get out there and make a difference! Design your future by getting involved!

— Shannon Ross, GVS



## Visit Us Online For All Our Program Details! [www.gvsonline.ca](http://www.gvsonline.ca)

### A Client Testimonial

After being hospitalized for severe depression and anxiety disorder, as well as having received a diagnosis of Fibromyalgia (Arthritis), I required guidance and support to return to work, and sought this out at GVS. Over the past year, I have attended some useful workshops at GVS. The workshops and the staff have provided me with the resources and encouragement to improve my mental health and help prepare me to return to work.

With the intention of returning to work and possible re-education, I completed vocational testing to discover my capabilities, potential, and skills. With the combined efforts of myself and my GVS Case Manager/Job Developer, I received funding and was accepted in to The University of British Columbia as a part-time student.

After studying for approximately 16 months, I have graduated with honors and earned a Certificate in Multimedia and Web Development

While attending school part time, I have volunteered at the GVS office. This opportunity has allowed me to develop new skills, engage with others, and has provided me with a weekly structure. Volunteering at GVS has been thoroughly beneficial to me as everyone has been very encouraging, considerate, and accommodating. I have gained valuable transferable skills which will benefit me in future employment, and have been able to give back a little, since GVS has played a huge role in guiding me towards self improvement and increased my overall mental health.

In regards to my physical limitations, GVS has also assisted me by providing me with the necessary tools and equipment to attend school and be able to study at home in comfort.

My experience with GVS has been gratifying and worthwhile. I realize how fortunate I am in receiving continued support and encouragement from everyone at the agency and in particular, to my job developer. I am exceptionally appreciative and grateful to have had the tremendous opportunity in re-educating, and look forward putting my web development skills to work.

Sincerely,

Desiree Mercier



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### Sizzling Summer Recipe

#### Coconut Tiger Prawns

- Tiger prawns (15-20) preferably fresh
- 1 can coconut milk
- 3 eggs
- ½ cup flour
- ½ cup shredded coconut
- ½ teaspoon chili powder or dried chili flakes
- ¼ to ½ cup grape seed oil or olive oil

1. Remove shells from prawns. Butterfly them by gently slicing down the center of the back

2. Put coconut milk, chili powder (or dried chili flakes), and prawns in a bowl and marinate 30 – 60 minutes

3. Preheat the oven to 350°

4. Beat eggs with a fork. Put the flour, eggs, and shredded coconut each in their own bowl

5. Cover a baking sheet or shallow grill pan with tinfoil; bring the tinfoil up and over the edges of the sheet. Saturate the tinfoil sheet with the oil (enough to shallow-fry the prawns)

6. Once marinated, gently roll the prawn in the Flour mixture. Dip prawn into the egg mixture, and then back to the flour mixture. Gently roll the prawn in the shredded coconut, and place on the baking sheet. Repeat with each prawn

7. Bake 15 to 20 min or until slightly browned, turning prawns half way through baking. Serve with Sweet and Sour Chili Sauce or Mango Salsa

*Enjoy and please check out my artwork on my website!*

Desiree Mercier

[www.desireemercier.com](http://www.desireemercier.com)

