# A Brighter Future









Our mission is to provide programs for individuals on the autism spectrum and their families. while promoting acceptance and inclusion through community engagement and training initiatives across BC and beyond.



## **Programming for Children (3-12)**

**Goal:** To provide a positive, highly supported introductory experience that encourages social connection and confidence-building.

Focus Areas: Sports, Recreation, and Arts



## Programming and Services for Youth and Adults (13+)

**Goal:** To support Autistic individuals at the community level during important transitions into adulthood.

**Focus Areas:** Mental Health and Wellness, Leisure and Recreation, Social Connection, Employment and Volunteering, Life Skills



## **Training and Community Engagement**

**Goal:** To build capacity by empowering a wide range of community groups and organizations to better support, welcome and effectively include people on the autism spectrum in all community spaces.

**Focus Areas:** Training, Sensory Friendly Events and Spaces, Resource Development and Consultation



## **Family Experiences**

**Goal:** To deliver fun, accessible activities for the whole family to enjoy, while building meaningful social connections with other families.

Focus Areas: Community Level Activities Across Regions and Seasons

## 2022 Impact at a Glance













31 staff on the autism spectrum

40 volunteers on the autism spectrum







88 virtual programs



## **Navigation**

- © CEO and Interim Board Chair Message (6-7)
- Family Experiences (8-10)
- Children's Programs (11-14)
- **Youth and Adult Programs (15-21)** 
  - Recreation (16)
  - Employment Programs and Services (17)
  - Mental Health and Wellness (19-21)
- Training and Community Engagement (22-26)
- Fundraising and Events (27-31)
- Financials (32-33)
- Thank You To Our Donors (34 -42)

2022 was a memorable year characterized by optimism, connection and continued growth.

We enthusiastically welcomed the return of all in-person programming and more than doubled the number of program spaces offered pre-COVID. Some of what we thought might be short-term innovations have instead proven to be long-lasting changes that will help shape future planning, such as the addition of virtual programs. This new virtual stream that kept us connected through a changing world has emerged as an essential part of our portfolio of programming for both children and adults on the autism spectrum.

A heightened focus on mental health programming for Autistic youth and adults also helped define the year, as well as a more intentional approach to reducing barriers to program access. All efforts resulted in a record-high Canucks Autism Network (CAN) membership base and associated demand for programs.

Similarly, we saw an influx of requests for autism training and consultation, highlighting a growing commitment to accessibility and inclusion across sectors and communities. We responded by further building the CAN team to ensure we could support the ever-increasing desire to learn, include, and adapt.



With the inspiring support and commitment of our donors, Board, sponsors, partners, and funders, notably the Canucks for Kids Fund, we achieved strong financial results and tangible impact for our CAN community. This groundswell of support from businesses, organizations, and individuals alike was seen through in-person fundraising events, in-store campaigns, golf tournaments, and innovative new ways to raise money while showcasing the cause.

But this year's impact wouldn't have been possible if it weren't for the passionate people who live and breathe our shared mission every day. It's thanks to the hundreds of frontline program staff and volunteers and over 50 dedicated office staff that this positive change is possible. And it's thanks to supporters like you, that we can continue to do this important work.

As we enter our 15th year, we are building for the future by investing in several large-scale projects that will transform the way we do business and empower our ability to serve our growing community for years to come. We hope that you will join us as we take action to position ourselves for an even brighter future.

**Britt Andersen** 

Canucks Autism Network CFO

147

Mark Zastre
Interim Board Chair and Treasurer





# **FAMILY EXPERIENCES**



## An accessible athletic stage

CAN Sports Day returned to BC Place after a two-year hiatus, welcoming a record-high **2,700 members**.

Participants had the opportunity to cycle through nine sports-related stations supported by trained staff, players, and alumni from the following professional sports teams and Provincial Sport Organizations:

- Vancouver Canucks
- Vancouver Whitecaps FC
- Vancouver Warriors
- BC Athletics
- BC Golf
- BC Lacrosse
- Tennis BC
- Volleyball BC





## The power of shared experiences

Family Experiences continued to see high demand this past year with **14,767 participant spaces being filled** across the Lower Mainland, Vancouver Island, and Interior.

Over 3,700 CAN members experienced the magic of the holiday season with the return of in-person events such as the Christmas Train in Duncan, Glow in Langley, and the first-ever PNE Winter Fair in Vancouver.



"My kid was screaming and crying because she had never done any kind of mountain activities before. My husband told her don't worry it's a CAN event! The moment she heard CAN she started to smile and was ready to go without any fear. She trusts CAN and knows she is in a safe place." - CAN Parent



## **CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS**





## Renewed connection and growth

- In Summer 2022, CAN piloted 6-week summer day camps in Victoria and Fraser Valley and brought them back in the Lower Mainland and Kelowna.
- Virtual programs continued to see high demand, with 1,749 virtual spots being filled, and Coding being ranked as the top choice for many members, even over in-person programs.
- CAN offered our first-ever weeklong Music Summer Camp, in partnership with the Sarah McLachlan School of Music, and invited participants to perform at CAN's Reveal Gala.
- CAN integrated golf into our Multisport curriculum and summer camps thanks to our partnership with BC Golf and Els for Autism Foundation.



"I was teary eyed on the first day of the program because it was the first time that my son was able to join an activity where he didn't feel left out."

- CAN Parent





Autism BC BC Golf

Britannia Community Centre, Vancouver Cameron Recreation Complex, Burnaby Chilliwack Gymnastics, Chilliwack

City of Abbotsford

City of Kamloops

City of Kelowna

City of Surrey

City of Victoria

City of West Kelowna

City Centre Aquatic Complex, Coquitlam

codeAbility

Community Recreational Initiatives Society

(CRIS) Adaptive Adventures

Douglas Recreation Centre, Langley

Edmonds Community Centre, Burnaby Guildford Recreation Centre, Surrey

Jays Care Foundation

Kamloops Gymnastics Trampoline Centre

Little Reptile Queen

Pacific Institute for Sport Education (PISE)

Pacific Sport Fraser Valley

Pacific Sport Vancouver Island

Pacific Sport Vancouver Island

Parks Canada Place Des Arts

Play It Again Sports

Poirier Sport and Leisure Complex, Coquitlam

Power To Be

Sarah McLachlan School of Music

Surrey Fire Department

Tong Louie Family YMCA, Surrey

TumbleTown Movement Education Centre

UBC Geering Up

Vancouver Canucks Live 2 Give Day

West Richmond Community Centre, Richmond





## **YOUTH AND ADULT PROGRAMS**



## Removing barriers to access

One of the most common barriers that Autistic youth and adults face is the need for a formal autism diagnosis to access supports. In 2022, CAN removed the requirement for individuals aged 13 and older to provide proof of diagnosis to enroll in CAN programs.



- This past year, CAN consulted with Autistic youth, adults, and caregivers across BC to help determine the direction of CAN's youth and adult recreation programs. Key findings pointed to the need for longer-term programs that offer flexible supports, a variety of formats, and a more individualized approach.
- CAN's first-ever long-term Leisure Education program will be piloted this spring, with the goal of helping participants identify and meet their community recreation goals.
- CAN implemented a new partnership structure to create more opportunities for Autistic youth and adults to access community-based recreation.



## **EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

## **Building more inclusive workplaces**

## **CAN IS A READY, WILLING AND ABLE (RWA) PARTNER**

RWA is a national initiative that engages, educates, and supports employers to hire people on the autism spectrum or with an intellectual disability. RWA also provides navigation services and connects Autistic job seekers to employment supports and resources in the community.

- CAN's RWA efforts expanded to Kelowna this past year
- Lower Mainland: 45 Autistic job seekers hired in 2021/22
- Kelowna: 20 Autistic job seekers hired from Jan-Aug 2022

# CAN SKILLS TRAINING EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (CAN-STEP)

Over the course of 12 weeks, Autistic youth and adults receive paid classroom training and work experience across the Lower Mainland.

- 65 participants enrolled in the CAN-STEP program in 2021/22
- To date, 46 participants have finished classroom training and work experience placements
- 30 of the 46 participants are now employed, representing a
   65% employment rate





## EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

## **Pre-Employment Programs**

Proudly supported by RBC

## TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

In Summer 2022, CAN piloted a two-week community-based program that provided Autistic participants, aged 15-25, with the opportunity to learn life skills (eg. public transit use, cooking basics), career skills (eg. resume building, volunteering), and self-care strategies (eg. mental health maintenance).

## **EXPLORE VOLUNTEERING**

In Fall 2022, CAN reintroduced Explore Volunteering which invites Autistic youth and adults to sample a variety of volunteer tasks in locations across Metro Vancouver. The program encourages community engagement while developing volunteer experience, work skills, and communication and social skills.





## **Untapped Inclusion Award**

CAN was honoured as the recipient of the Open Door Group's Untapped Award for Workplace Inclusion in the Non-Profit or Public Sector category. We are proud to stand among other like-minded organizations who recognize and promote the benefits of an inclusive and diverse workforce.

## **MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS**

# Building support through understanding

- In collaboration with Autism Nova Scotia, CAN launched the 'Supporting Autistic Mental Health in the Workplace' online training module. The module was designed to help employers understand the unique needs of Autistic employees, with practical supports to increase mental health in the workplace.
- CAN developed a new training module in collaboration with Foundry BC to empower Foundry Peer Support Workers to better understand how to welcome and support Autistic youth. The training provides effective strategies for working with Autistic youth and covers topics such as choosing empowering language, debunking misconceptions, recognizing strengths and differences, and finding shared experiences.





# **Empowerment throughout connection** and education

- CAN introduced a Women's Peer Support Group for Autistic individuals, aged 18+, who identify as a woman or non-binary, transgender inclusive. The purpose of the group is to provide a safe space to validate and inform each other's experiences while fostering friendships and social contacts. The group is co-facilitated by a Clinical Social Worker whose practice focuses on supporting Autistic adults experiencing anxiety, and an Autistic Peer Facilitator.
- CAN launched a six-part workshop series facilitated by subject-matter experts, Dr. David Worling and Leah Marks, focused on key concepts of mental health literacy and wellness.
- Additional workshops led by self-advocates and mental health professionals included Healthy Sleeping Habits, An Introduction to Mindfulness, and Setting Healthy Boundaries.



#### **Recreation and Social Connection**

BC Parks Foundation

**Beyond Capture** 

Blind Tiger Comedy

CARSA (Centre for Athletics, Recreation and Special Abilities)

Chill Foundation

codeAbility

Community Recreation Initiatives Society (CRIS) Adaptive

Adventures

**MOVE Adapted Fitness** 

North Vancouver Recreation and Culture (NVRC)

Papa John's King George

PISE (Pacific Institute for Sport Education)

Rowing BC

Shift Education

TransLink

Vancouver Curling Club

WildPlay Maple Ridge

WildPlay Nanaimo

### **Employment and Life Skills**

**Beyond Capture** 

codeAbility

RBC

Rogers Arena

Science World

Spectrum Works Consulting

Stanley Park Ecological Society TransLink

Working Gear

#### **Mental Health and Wellness**

Autism Nova Scotia

Crisis Center BC

Dori Zener and Associates

Foundry BC

Hillcrest Community Center

Pet and Friends

Rae Morris Counselling Group

Shift Education

Spectrum Works Consulting





## TRAINING AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



# Building capacity across community spaces and sectors

- CAN delivered training to Vancouver Art Gallery staff, created customized CAN Resource Kits, and consulted on a future permanent Sensory Friendly Space.
- CAN trained staff from BC Parks Foundation and Parks Canada and resumed the Learn to Camp program for families for the first time since 2019.
   We also developed a video resource with BC Parks to frontload visitors of what to expect when visiting and camping in a BC Park.
- CAN delivered training to over 150 RCMP officers and dispatchers on how to identify and support people on the spectrum in emergency situations.
- CAN traveled to Nelson to run trainings for sport and rec providers, teachers, education assistants, medical practitioners, and first responders.





## Paving the way for BCHL teams

## **COQUITLAM EXPRESS AUTISM ACCEPTANCE GAME**

On Sunday, February 27, the Coquitlam Express hosted their first-ever Autism Acceptance Game and committed to promoting accessibility and inclusion all season-long by offering resources and services for fans on the autism spectrum at every home game.

The special game featured an Autistic announcer and anthem singer and a more sensory friendly environment with lowered music, no horn, and a designated quiet room for anyone needing a break from the sensory-rich environment. CAN Resource Kits containing sensory toys to reduce anxiety, a game schedule to improve predictability, and noise-cancelling headphones to ease sensory sensitivities were also made available to fans on the spectrum.

After the game, over 100 CAN families had the opportunity to hit the ice alongside Express players, capping off an incredible celebration of autism acceptance!



"We're thankful to Canucks
Autism Network for working
with us on this event. I'm
learning. My staff are learning.
And our players are learning."

- Tali, Express Chief Operating Officer and General Manager



#### Sport

Chilliwack Gymnastics

City of Coquitlam

City of Richmond City of Vancouver

Coaching Association of Canada Community Recreation Initiatives Society

(CRIS) Adaptive Adventures

Curl BC

Fort Canoe and Kayak Club Jays Care Foundation

Jumpstart

Kamloops Gymnastics

Kamloops Youth Soccer Association

Moresports

Pacific Institute for Sports Education (PISE)

PacificSport Rowing BC Soccer Shots Special Olympics Sport for Life

Tennis BC Tennis Canada

The Hive Bouldering Gym

TumbleTown Movement Education Centre West Vancouver Minor Hockey Association

#### Recreation

BC Recreation and Parks Association (BCRPA)

Blind Tiger Comedy City of Abbotsford City of Coquitlam

City of Delta City of Port Coquitlam

City of Richmond City of Surrey

City of Vancouver

Keats Camp Langley City

MOVE Adapted Fitness

Place des Arts

**PRIYD** 

The Salvation Army

YMCA of Greater Vancouver

#### **Community Spaces**

**BC Parks** 

Fort Langley National Historic Site Kamloops Wildlife Park

Museum of North Vancouver

Museum of Surrey

Ocean Wise Science World

Theatre Under the Stars

Vancouver Aquarium Vancouver Art Gallery

#### **Community Engagement**

BC Parks

**BC** Rapid Transit Company

City of Surrey

Fort Langlev National Historic Site

Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria

Parks Canada Power To Be Rogers Arena Science World Transl ink

Vancouver Aquarium

YVR Vancouver International Airport

### **First Responders**

North Vancouver RCMP

BC Emergency Health Services (BC EHS) City of North Vancouver Fire Department District of North Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services North Shore Search and Rescue





# **FUNDRAISING AND EVENTS**





## Stepping up to support

### U-LOCK ▼

From March to June 2022, six U-Lock locations across the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island set a goal to fundraise \$5,000 for CAN. By reaching out to their customers, donating 5% of their merchandise sales, and hosting a toy raffle, they not only met their goal but almost doubled it by raising a whopping \$9,090.16!

U-Lock has already committed to fundraising in 2023 and will likely shatter their goal yet again.



### PIZZA HUT ▶

Since 2020, Pizza Hut, Dairy Queen and Orange Julius locations across BC have been supporting CAN by collecting donations at the till. The inaugural year featured a month-long fundraising campaign in select locations.

Last year, 56 Pizza Hut locations and 11 DQ and OJ locations joined forces to raise \$7,800 over the span of four months.



#### WARNER RENTALS >

Since 2019, Warner Rentals has supported the growth of CAN in Kamloops through charitable golf tournaments, sponsorship, and most recently, their Warner Cares program.

The program donates 10% of the annual rental revenue from skid steers wrapped with CAN branding back to the cause.



## The return of signature events

#### A NIGHT IN ALL WHITE

In celebration of CAN's 5th Reveal Gala, CAN Founders, Paolo and Clara Aquilini, opened their breathtaking home to 270 guests who contributed to an all-time event-high of \$1,113,374 raised!

Magical moments included a heartfelt rendition of "Lean on Me" performed by the CAN Music Group, a poignant speech by CAN Adult, Nate Keller, and Motown chart-topping hits by Grammy-Winning Legend, Thelma Houston. The entire cast of The Good Doctor was in attendance, with special remarks shared by series star, Freddie Highmore.

The charitable success would not have been possible without the inspiring support of all donors and sponsors, and the hard work of the volunteer Gala Committee, led by fearless Co-Chairs, Clara Aquilini and Jill Killeen.



Gala Committee
Clara Aquilini, Co-Chair
Jill Killeen, Co-Chair
Sienna Aquilini
Athena Bax
Manuel Bernaschek
Charmaine Crooks, C.M.
Ashleigh Kim
Patrizia Leone-Mitchell
Saeedeh Salem
Carolyn Scholz
Christi Yassin



## **CAN PRO-AM**

Since its inaugural year in 2019, this annual charitable hockey tournament has continued to reach new fundraising heights, and the 2022 CAN Pro-Am, presented by Dallas Watt Demo Ltd, was no exception.

Held November 18-20 at The Westin Bayshore and North Surrey Sport and Ice Complex, the event featured 16 teams, 18 NHL Alumni, and over 230 rec players determined to make a difference. After months of fundraising, players succeeded in raising an all-time high of over \$825,000 in support of CAN.

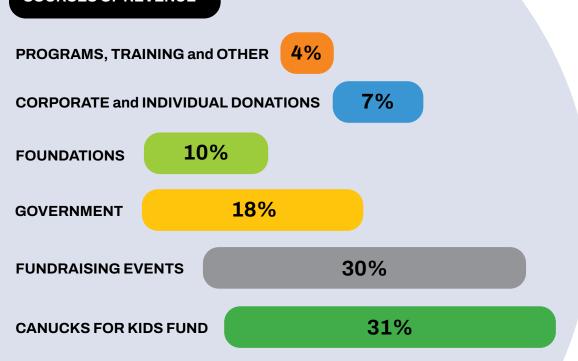
Participating NHL Alumni included Canucks fan favourites Todd Bertuzzi, Brad May, and Jannik Hansen, who brought their A-game both on and off the ice. Fundraising legend Bob Shanks topped the individual standings for the fourth straight year, while The Constructors were crowned top fundraising team, earning the right to first overall pick.

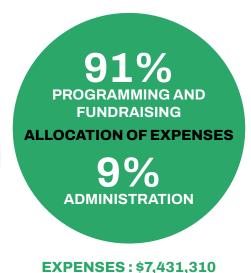
Over the course of the weekend, players had the opportunity to share the ice with CAN participants whose lives have been transformed thanks to supporters like them. The event culminated in an All-Star Game featuring two Autistic adults who learned to skate and play hockey with CAN. It was a fitting end to a weekend that will ensure countless other individuals on the spectrum can break barriers and realize their dreams.



**REVENUE: \$7,432,108** 

## **SOURCES OF REVENUE**





It was very much "back to normal" in fiscal 2022 with in-person programs ramping up in many cases to pre-COVID levels and in some cases, beyond that.

Summer camps marked a notable area of growth in program offerings by more than doubling in size, with the addition of first-time camps in Victoria and Fraser Valley.

Fiscal 2022 also saw the return of in-person marquee fundraising events like the CAN Reveal Gala. We are very appreciative of the exceptional support of the gala and other signature events and the resulting positive impact they will have on our ability to continue to fund program growth into the future.

Another key factor in our success this past year was the support of our partners in the provincial and federal governments. Continuation of government support of programs like Ready, Willing and Able and Employment and Social Development Canada have allowed us to grow our youth and adult programming in the areas of employment, mental health, social connection, and wellness.

With the increasing government support and our existing strong financial position, we will continue to strategically grow our programs and offerings to positively impact as many individuals on the autism spectrum as possible.

#### Mark Zastre

Interim Board Chair and Treasurer





## **THANK YOU TO OUR 2021-2022 SUPPORTERS**



## **Donor Spotlight**

### **SARAN FAMILY**

In 2019, Sherry Saran started a bottle drive to raise funds for CAN in honour of her son Ethan, who is on the autism spectrum. Each year, the bottle drive is met with overwhelming community support from friends and strangers alike. Even when faced with the challenges of COVID, the Saran family pivoted to ensure bottle pickups could be executed safely and efficiently.

This past year, the Saran's presented CAN with a cheque for \$8,146.40, half of which was donated by Ethan's parents, Sherry and Shawn, who stepped up to match the funds raised on event day.





#### **THE GREAT ONE \$1,000,000**

Canucks for Kids Fund

#### HALL OF FAME \$100,000 - \$999,999

Allan and Gill Gray Philanthropy BMO Bank of Montreal Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities Els For Autism Canada Hume Investments Ltd. Lawrence and Sandi Thiessen Ready, Willing, and Able Stober Foundation

#### ALL STARS \$50,000 - \$99,999

**BC** Community Gaming

Dallas Watt Demo Ltd.

DB Perks and Associates Ltd. (Commerical Aquatic Supplies)

Donald Cameron Charitable Gift Fund, In Memory of Donald Cameron

Nicola Wealth

North Family Foundation

Ron and Ann Brinkhurst

Third Space Properties Inc.

Vancouver Airport Authority

Warner Rentals Ltd.

Yassin Family Foundation



#### MVPs \$10,000 - \$49,999

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Albert Lim

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**Beyond Capture** 

**Brodrum Family Foundation** 

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Michael C. Burtch

Michael Moscone

Milani Plumbing, Heating and Air Conditioning

Moody Ales and Co Ltd.

Neil Watson

Neilson Financial Corp

Nicole Yang

Odlum Brown Limited

Onni Group of Companies

Paolo and Clara Aquilini

PAR Classic Golf Tournament

Patrick Priestner

Paul Tam

Philanthropic Leadership

Foundation

**Prospera Foundation** 

**RBC** Foundation

Rennie Foundation

Royal Bank of Canada

Sean and Saeedeh Salem

Sherry Saran Personal Real

Estate Corporation

Surrey Fire Fighters' Charitable Society

Society

Talal and Christi Yassin

Wheaton Precious Metals Corp.





THE PROS \$1.000 - \$9.999

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Aeronay Avionics Inc.

Aiav Mann Alex Visser

Ali Adab

Ali Hakimzadeh Alice Chee

Anderson Family Foundation

Andrew Rvan Angus Wall Anne McAnerney

**Aqueduct Foundation** 

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Inc.

Astech Consultants Ltd. Atlant Installation Ltd. Atlas Pest Control

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**Betty Averbach Foundation** 

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Meiklejohn Architechts Inc. Meridian Farm Market - Ralphs Meridian Meats and Seafood Ltd.

Michael and Nancy Czorny Charitable Trust

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Milka Lala **MNPLLP** 

Modern Aluminum and Vinyl Products Ltd.

Molly Lu

Monet Tyler Personal Real Estate

Corporation Murray Neilson Nancy Segsworth Nathan Gilmour Nathan Linton Naz Taylor **Nelson Lepage Nevin Chernick** Niall Kavanagh





### THE PROS \$1,000 - \$9,999

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Noni Marler

Noureddin Nourbakhsh Nucor Environmental

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Pacific Blends Ltd.
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Patrizia Leone Mitchell Paul and Davina Zalesky

Paul Balfour Paul Myring

Peach Family Foundation

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PH Restaurants Limited

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Propane Depot Inc.

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Raymond James Canada

Raymond James Canada

Foundation

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United Way of Calgary and Area

Uno Gelato

Vancouver Foundation Vancouver Minor Hockey

Assocation, U11- A1 team, 2022

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VPAC Construction Group

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**Barry Bentley** 

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Sergio Del Rio

Shannon Fairley

Xi Nan

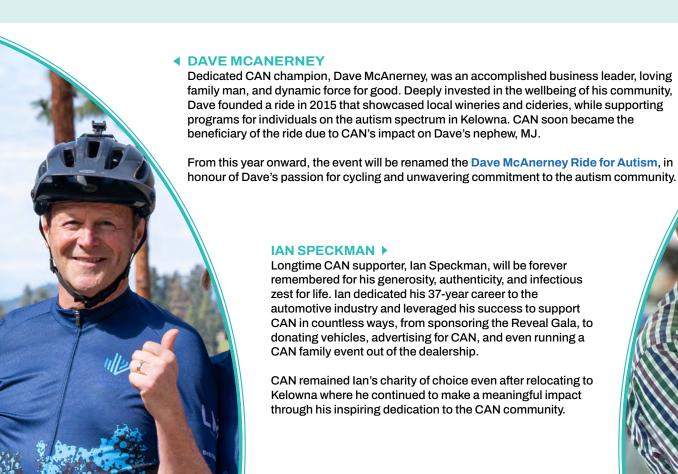
Young Woo Yi



Adam Andre Amrita Pritam Bal Darlene Nygren Dave McAnerney

Diane Jette Helen Urbani Ian Speckman Jim Cawker

Karen Kester Katie Rusvn Kevin Allara Sheila Mancor



Longtime CAN supporter, Ian Speckman, will be forever remembered for his generosity, authenticity, and infectious zest for life. Ian dedicated his 37-year career to the automotive industry and leveraged his success to support CAN in countless ways, from sponsoring the Reveal Gala, to donating vehicles, advertising for CAN, and even running a CAN family event out of the dealership.

CAN remained lan's charity of choice even after relocating to Kelowna where he continued to make a meaningful impact through his inspiring dedication to the CAN community.



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Mark Zastre, Interim Board Chair and Treasurer
Clara Aquilini
Charmaine Crooks C.M.
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Garth Stoll
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Our vision is for every individual on the autism spectrum to be understood, accepted, and supported in all community spaces.