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**Reaching
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PLUS Master Chef,
Women in Real
Estate, and Business
Profile

Rob Newell photo



KRISTINE SALZMANN
REPORTER

A larger space, an accessible facility, and a building tailored to meet their needs—and the needs of the families they serve.

Reach Child and Youth Development Society is planning for a new home in central Ladner and is reaching out to the community to help build their dream facility.

The non-profit organization has offered programs and services for youth with a range of developmental needs for more than 50 years.

It's currently located in east Ladner—turn south on 72nd Street off Ladner Trunk Road and continue past the turn-off for the Boundary Bay Airport. When the rain turns to sleet beware of the ditches on either side.

It's not the most accessible facility for families without vehicles, and hardly a visible site for raising the society's profile—"On the fringes," as executive director Renie D'Aquila says.

The building was constructed four decades ago as a residence for older teens with special needs working at the Ladner Farm Training

Centre. Reach has adapted the space, serving between 800 to 1,000 children every year. But they would like to reach more.

Fifteen per cent of the population have special needs, says communications director Cathy Nidoski, which translates to potentially 3,486 children impacted by special needs in Delta.

Thanks to a partnership with the Corporation of Delta and local Kinsmen Club, in a few years Reach will have plenty of room to grow as well as enhance its connections in the community.

The society plans to redevelop Kin House in Ladner, a decades-old building on 47th Avenue next to Ladner Memorial Park.

The municipality endorsed the use of the facility and contributed the land, valued at more than \$1 million. The local Kinsmen Club is on board as well, and fine with being homeless while construction is underway for the centre that will include a space for them as well.

But ground is not likely to be broken until 2015. Reach must first raise \$3.7 million over four years to cover capital costs.

They are in the process of launching

that campaign, titled Building for Children Together. The word "together" is particularly important to Reach.

"This is going to be a community effort to raise the money. And it's going to benefit the community in so many different ways," says Nidoski. "We know there are so many people who are excited to see this happen."

Reach's current facility covers about 14,000-square-feet—the new building will be 19,500-square-feet, with the potential to expand another 2,000-square-feet if the funding and need is there. In addition to the extra space, they've had the opportunity to design the layout in a way that fits their needs.

Plans include larger therapy rooms (occupational, physiotherapy, and speech and language), rooms for counselling, toy, book and equipment lending libraries, and space for their preschool with a playground. Nidoski said Reach is particularly looking forward to being able to expand its services and programs for older children.

"That's a really underserved population with special needs in Delta right now, older youth... There are more children with special needs who are older who are needing

services and who require those kinds of big spaces that are designed for them," says Nidoski. "We'd like to see something that can be exclusively for youth and have their input in that as well."

Plans could include a drop-in centre or lounge where youth with learning disabilities can hang out while developing the social-emotional skills needed to make and keep friends and develop relationships. Hopes are to also offer more programs that assist teens in transitioning to adulthood, such as help preparing for post-secondary education or gaining work-readiness skills.

Reach also wants to assist more youth with high-functioning learning disabilities such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

"There's a whole target area of kids with learning disabilities that needs addressing, such as ADHD," says D'Aquila. "Those kids are not being well served... So they are kids that both have a lot of problems and potential given the right kind of support at the right time."

Nidoski says Reach will be consulting with the community to learn more about what families want in the new facility. One need identified is an events room both for Reach's

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Opposite page: Reach, local Kinsmen, and the Corporation of Delta have come together to make a new home for Reach possible. Left to right: Kinsmen Kerry Condon and Dave McMillan, Reach foundation director Irene Forcier, Kinsmen Charter member Edgar Dunning, Reach communications director Cathy Nidoski, Reach executive director Renie D'Aquila, and Delta Councillor Anne Peterson. This page: Reach serves youth with a wide range of developmental needs, from preschoolers (above, the inclusive preschool program), to older children (right, a weekend respite program), an age group they hope to reach more of once they move to a more central location in Ladner. *Rob Newell photos and contributed photo*



parent workshops that can also be rented out for presentations and gatherings by other groups.

In addition to being able to serve more youth with the additional space, Nidoski said they are excited to be moving to a centralized location where they can connect with other service groups. Reach's new home will neighbour the Ladner Pioneer Library, Delta Senior Secondary School (easy access for teens), and the Boys and Girls Club's Ladner site, to name a few. There's also the potential for intergenerational activities with the Kinsmen Club.

The facility will be built using green building principles, says Nidoski, to limit the environmental footprint as well as create a healthier environment for the kids.

To raise funds, Reach has launched its Building for Children Together campaign online (donation forms can be downloaded at <http://reachdevelopment.org>). The society, which has about 50 volunteers, will also take part in community events during the holiday season, such as the Tsawwassen Business Improvement Association's Christmas gift wrap

program where they will wrap presents by donation. They also hope to host a walk-a-thon in the spring centered around Kin House.

In the meantime Reach is continuing to enhance its current programs and services, including the addition of a relatively new Applied Behavioral Analysis program for children ages six and under with autism, and by shifting the focus of their inclusive preschool to help children better prepare for full day kindergarten.

"It's all about serving more kids, and supporting more kids," says D'Aquila. "Being in the heart of the community, in the middle of the community, I think will be very exciting for our families." *reporter@southdeltaleader.com*

Look for the South Delta Leader's annual Flavour Favourites cookbook in the Oct. 29 issue. The annual cookbook raises awareness for Reach Child and Youth Development's Building for Children Together campaign. Plus, it provides you with the favourite recipes from people in your community.

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