



BELLWOODS COMMUNITY NEWS

SPRING 2025

In this issue

- A message from Susan Andrew (pg 2)
- Community Corner - Admin Professionals' Day (pg 4)
- Events - Client BBQ, Save the date (pg 5)

THE HEADLINES

Client survey results: Deauville and Shaw clinch top prize

This winter, Bellwoods asked for your honest feedback in the "Tell Us Like It Is" Client Experience Survey. Thank you again for taking the time and energy to share your thoughts with us.

In total, 63% of clients filled out the survey – that's 10% more than last time we surveyed in 2023! Big congrats to our Deauville and Shaw clients who had the highest percentage of completed surveys per site. You've earned a free celebratory lunch from Bellwoods. Your site supervisors will be in touch soon with details on your meal.

63% *of Bellwoods clients filled out the survey*

Now, we're looking ahead. We're reviewing your responses and learning where we need to improve. Keep your eye out later this month for a *What We Heard Report*, where we'll share key highlights from the survey responses and plans to make change for good.

Tax season support

Over the last month, Bellwoods organized tax clinics across multiple supportive housing sites. CRA-certified accountants hosted the clinics, supporting 50 clients and eight staff members with their 2024 tax returns.

If you didn't get a chance to attend one of the clinics and are looking for some help with taxes, our Community Integration Workers (CIWs) are here to lend a hand. E-mail ciw@bcclsp.org for support!

First Bellwoods memorial service

On March 18, we hosted our first guided memorial event, providing a space for our community to walk through grief together.

Clients and team members gathered at the Shaw site for a meaningful afternoon honouring the people we've lost, both from Bellwoods and our personal lives.

We will host these events regularly, ensuring every community member is seen and supported through loss.

STAFFING NEWS

A message from Susan Andrew



As many of you know, after 30 wonderful years with Bellwoods Centres, it is time for me to say goodbye. It has been an incredible journey, and I am filled with gratitude as I reflect on all that we have shared together over the years.

I want to take a moment to thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for allowing me to be a part of your lives and your personal journeys. It has truly been a privilege. Every day at Bellwoods, I've witnessed strength, resilience and a commitment to independence, something that I know I will carry with me. The trust you placed in us has meant the world to me, and I am forever grateful for the connections we've made and the growth we've experienced together.

Throughout my time here, I have learned so much from each of you. You've taught me the true value of independence and the importance of supporting one another with dignity, respect and compassion.

I am proud of the work we've accomplished together, and I'm confident that the incredible team at Bellwoods will continue to support and empower you all in ways that matter most. I leave knowing that the work will carry on and that the spirit of independence will always remain at the heart of this organization.

Thank you again for all the moments, the shared experiences, and for allowing me to be a part of your lives. I will treasure these memories forever.

With heartfelt appreciation and best wishes for the future,

Susan

Compassionate leadership training

This week, our front-line supervisors started a new training program that will support them to become even stronger, more compassionate leaders. At Bellwoods, we're committed to taking care of our staff and empowering them to lead others.

This training program will support supervisors to:

- Reduce burnout
- Strengthen caregiving
- Support clients and staff through loss
- Take care of themselves and others



STAFFING NEWS

New team members

Meet the staff who joined Bellwoods over the last few months.

Adrian Puopolo - Vice President, People, Culture and Operations

Adrian is an experienced human resources senior leader, having spearheaded recruitment, talent management, employee and labour relations, occupational health and safety, organizational development, talent management and volunteer services. He has also collaborated closely with operational leadership.

Adrian's experience spans various positions in health care and private sector telecoms. He is passionate about building collaborative, inclusive and diverse organizational culture.

Claudia Gomez - Independent Living Facilitator, Occupational Therapist

Claudia has in-depth experience in occupational therapy and case management. Having worked in local and international health-care settings, Claudia brings a proven commitment to improving client outcomes.

Hillary McMurren - Community Integration Worker (contract)

Hillary has 14 years of experience in residential support and community services. She has advocated for clients in supportive housing environments and looks forward to working with the Bellwoods community.

Nirogi Kuganeshen - Client Engagement and Volunteer Coordinator

This brand new role will directly support client-focused programs, events and services. Nirogi has a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and is currently pursuing a Graduate Certificate in Addictions and Mental Health. She has experience organizing events and overseeing volunteers and will work directly with clients to develop engaging programming.

Jay Martin - Procurement Specialist

Jay joins Bellwoods' finance team with a robust background in procurement, project management and vendor relations. He has an MBA coupled with certifications as a Project Management Professional (PMP) and Certified Supply Chain Professional (CSCP), as well as experience in procurement projects as a supervisor at Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.

Chisom Oruro - Digital Health Solution Specialist

Chisom joins the IT team for a one-year term, where he will focus on Bellwoods' use of AlayaCare, our client information and scheduling system. He is experienced in health-care technology, having completed the Health Informatics Program and Information Systems Business Analysis postgrad program at George Brown College.



Natasha Hwu - New Board Member

Natasha Hwu serves as a business manager at UHN, where she oversees financial planning and analysis for Toronto Rehab's Neuro, Spinal and Cardiac programs and previously for the Peter Munk Cardiac Centre. Natasha combines her financial expertise to help secure incremental funding for life-saving procedures and improve access to quality care. She is a CPA and holds a biochemistry degree from the University of Waterloo. Natasha also plays an active role in the CPA community to help promote the designation and guide aspiring professionals.

COMMUNITY CORNER

Administrative Professionals' Day

Next Wednesday, April 23, is Administrative Professionals' Day! At Bellwoods, our dedicated admin team works tirelessly behind the scenes to support clients, staff and the board.



Irena Apostolovska
Executive Assistant/Office Manager



Jennifer Heaton
Clerical Assistant



Hayley Hynes-McAleer
Clerical Assistant

How long have you worked at Bellwoods?

- **Irena:** 24 years
- **Jennifer:** 14 years
- **Hayley:** 6 months

What motivates you in your role?

- **Irena:** It's about the people and working towards accomplishing our mission to support clients' independence.
- **Jennifer:** It's being a part of something bigger. I get a great deal of satisfaction out of my contribution — it's a small part of the whole picture. I enjoy helping staff and clients with the daily things that come up.
- **Hayley:** It's both the clients we have and knowing the history of Bellwoods. I know all the good Bellwoods is capable of.

What do you enjoy most about working here?

- **Irena:** I like to be a part of a team that supports people. I like to be a part of colleagues' and clients' lives, helping create a life without barriers. I've been really happy to witness positive changes over the years.
- **Jennifer:** It feels a little like family. People are warm, friendly and connected. If someone's bogged down, we pitch in. There's something special about the work environment here.
- **Hayley:** It's the sense of community. It's people that are positive that have lived here for many years and continue to be really invested in Bellwoods.

What's a strength you bring to your position?

- **Irena:** I have good organizational skills, time management and confidentiality as I work with multiple levels of employees. I enjoy supporting the CEO and board members because I know they're motivated by the same mission we are. I would also say I have inner strength to get people motivated.
- **Jennifer:** I care a lot about my work. If I say I'm going to do something it means a lot to me that I follow through to the best of my ability. It means a lot to me to be dependable — I can be counted on.
- **Hayley:** I'm very team oriented. I like to be a person that supports others.

What's something people might not know about you?

- **Irena:** I like travelling very much. I like culture and art. My favourite place I've ever travelled is Italy. In another life I'd be a fashion guru in Milan.
- **Jennifer:** I like hiking and birding. I even have a birdfeeder with a camera lens in my backyard to capture pictures of the birds.
- **Hayley:** A couple of times a month I go to a trivia night. My trivia specialty is pop culture and random historical things.

When you see Irena, Jennifer or Hayley in the coming weeks, take a moment to say thank you for all they do!

EVENTS

Client BBQ - Save the date Thurs, June 26, 2025

Get ready for summer fun! This year, the Bellwoods annual client BBQ is getting a red-and-white makeover. Join us for the Great Canadian Cookout, where we'll celebrate all things Canuck ahead of the July long weekend.

It'll be a celebration of our country's diverse flavours, cultures and communities. Save the date and get ready for delicious food and engaging activities. Keep your eye out for more details in the coming weeks, including a link to RSVP.

National Volunteer Week April 27- May 3

The theme for National Volunteer Week is *Volunteers Make Waves*. Like a wave, volunteering is movement building. At Bellwoods, our 12 volunteer board members are deeply committed to the organization. We appreciate their time, energy and expertise.

Bellwoods is planning to launch a new volunteer program this spring, spearheaded by Nirogi, our new Client Engagement and Volunteer Coordinator! The program will bring in more community members to support events and programs that directly benefit clients.

May 19 is PSW Day: The Heartbeat of Healthcare

Next month, Bellwoods will celebrate our dedicated frontline staff as part of PSW Day 2025: the Heartbeat of Healthcare. PSWs are at the heart of what we do here, as they support clients and help the organization build towards a future where barriers do not exist.

Keep an eye on your e-mail inbox in May, as we'll be sharing a digital card where you can post a message of thanks to PSWs. We're grateful for this opportunity to say thank you.

REMINDERS

Bridging the Gap Fund

This program is for any client who might need some extra support when funds are tight or an emergency situation comes up that cannot be funded by another program.

Want to learn more? Contact the program coordinator at ciw@bccclsp.org or 416-970-6773.



Bellwoods Head Office
3 Concorde Gate, Suite 200
Toronto, ON. M3C 3N7
T: 416-696-9663
F: 416-696-9481
E: news@bccclsp.org
Charity Registration #:
10807 0665RR 0001

Since our inception over 65 years ago, Bellwoods has supported adults with disabilities to continue living in and contributing to their diverse communities in and around Toronto. We provide affordable, accessible housing, personal support and reintegration services for clients transitioning from hospital and those at risk of homelessness. We are a charitable not-for-profit.

Electronic copies of this newsletter are available on our website, bellwoodscentres.org. See About Us > Publications > Newsletters.