



North Shore ConneXions Society (ConneXions) is a non-profit organization that supports families and serves children and adults living with a developmental disability. Our vision is a community where all people with disabilities have equal opportunities to lead active, fulfilling lives and are recognized as contributing members of the community.



Community ConneXions Newsletter

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## Djavad Mowafaghian Foundation Creates a Lasting Impact for Society

As a long standing organization, ConneXions is privileged to have the ongoing support of many community partners. Each of our unique relationships in the community is paramount in helping us reach our vision: a community where all people with disabilities have equal opportunities to lead active, fulfilling lives and are recognized as contributing members of the community.

The Djavad Mowafaghian Foundation is one of these incredible partners. Because of their ongoing contributions, we have been able to better the lives of many of the individuals that we support and educate hundreds of members of our community. Many individuals with developmental disabilities face challenges and one challenge that we have helped them overcome is in the area



Hamid Eshghi, Aaron Thurston and Margaret Thomson at the Djavad Mowafaghian Foundation



Thank you Djavad Mowafaghian Foundation for making a difference in my life!

of literacy. Participants of our literacy program report decreased anxiety levels, increased confidence and most of all...the gift of being able to read.

In addition to having the ability to implement a highly successful literacy program, because of this generous donation, we are able to continue to go out into the community and educate hundreds of children

and teenagers on disability awareness through our Education and Community Awareness presentations.

The individuals, families and employees of ConneXions would like to thank Djavad Mowafaghian and his foundation; we are extremely grateful not only for the financial support but for recognizing the value of our work and the positive impact it has on our community.

## Mingle of the Jingles Celebrated its 10th Anniversary with a Bang

Mingle of the Jingles steps it up another notch every time. The annual holiday variety show and silent auction, when local amateur performers share the stage with professionals, has once again kicked off the holiday season with a bang.

This vital fundraising event has just seen its tenth annual show. Proceeds come directly to North Shore ConneXions Society. This year's show was packed with even more talent and surprises than ever before.

There were digitally projected backdrops and slick transitions between a variety of acts. Performances ranged from a sassy all-female cappella group and sparkling Bollywood dancers to solo singers and a 30-strong vocal ensemble. Between acts, hosts Marlee Walchuk and Conni Smudge had the audience rolling with laughter, while some of the

performances moved people to tears. Dance duo Lucky Aces made a surprise appearance. These two dynamic young Canadian hip-hop dancers have appeared twice on the Ellen show and are passionate about contributing to their community.

Jeremy Sellars watched and listened in awe as Canadian folk singer and winner of two Juno awards, Valdy, thoroughly entertained the crowd with his music and storytelling. Best known for his hit "Play me a Rock'n'Roll Song," it was then Valdy's turn to enjoy Sellars perform his personal rendition of "Blue Christmas." Both were given a standing ovation.

Once again, magic happened at Mingle of the Jingles. We hope you will join us for next year's show. Mark your calendar for December 7, 2016!



Canadian folk and country musician, Valdy



Jeremy Sellars



Sweet Scarlet...sweet they were, to everyone's ears

## ConneXions Self Advocate and Family Christmas Dinner and Dance

Each year ConneXions hosts a Christmas dinner and dance that is always well attended by many of our wonderful advocates and their families. As expected, our staff team

went above and beyond in each of their roles and we proudly acknowledge everyone for their continued dedication to making opportunities happen.

This event was held at the Seil Waututh Nations Recreation Centre in Deep Cove with the support of Lonsdale Rentals who equipped us with all the wonderful table settings and supplies. Everyone enjoyed a delicious dinner with tasty desserts provided by Tommy's Catering then danced the evening away with ConneXions long-time friend Graham Collins of Collins Entertainment.

Games and gifts showered the evening and guests shared special moments with one another at the ConneXions photo booth. Thank you to everyone who shared this wonderful night with all of us. We look forward to spending 2016 with all of you!



Angie and Kathy were all smiles at the party



Courtney and Ashley getting into the Christmas spirit at the photo booth

## Employment Program Update: New Year...new location!

For many the New Year signifies a time of new beginnings; it's a time for reflecting on what has been and looking forward to what will be. This year that could not be further from the truth for North Shore ConneXions Society. Customized ConneXions, one of two employment programs offered through the organization, kicked off 2016 by relocating its offices to the newly expanded YWCA WorkBC Employment Services Centre - North Shore. There are over 70 WorkBC Employment Services Centres across the province with the YWCA being the lead contractor for the program in three Metro Vancouver catchments areas - North Vancouver, Vancouver South and Vancouver Westside. The YWCA center houses a full computer lab and resource center, workshops and employment counselling services.

Like all WorkBC Employment Services Centres, the YWCA is committed to providing all British Columbians with the support necessary to find and maintain employment in their community. Recognizing that certain populations face greater challenges to employment than others, the YWCA has partnered with local agencies equipped to offer specialized employment services to sub-groups such as youth, new immigrants and those with disabilities. "We have been working with YWCA employment clients since the spring of 2014 providing customized employment support to people with disabilities at ConneXions head office" says Employment Specialist Grace McKirdy "this [move] is the next logical step for us. It's a great chance to collaborate with others working in the field of employment and a

fantastic opportunity for our clients to take advantage of the resources available at the centre". This is the first time that ConneXions has partnered with another service provider in this capacity and an exciting fresh start to the New Year for the Customized ConneXions team!



The WorkBC office is located at: 310-260 West Esplanade Avenue in North Vancouver

## SAVE THE DATE: ConneXions Photo and Video Contest April 11, 2016 Kay Meek Centre

North Shore ConneXions Society and the Digital Media Academy have partnered to deliver a Photo and Video Contest for North Shore youth. The event will take place on April 11, 2016 at Kay Meek Centre in West Vancouver. The project aim is to encourage students to play their part in creating an inclusive community. They will be required to use their creativity and imaginations.

The Digital Media Academy in the North Vancouver School District is a unique secondary program in the Lower Mainland that offers hands on experience with Digital Media Industry, projects and people.

Stay tuned for details at [www.nsconnexions.org/projectinclusion!](http://www.nsconnexions.org/projectinclusion!) Be sure to check our website and Facebook and Twitter pages for updates!