

ACES INITIATIVES TOWARDS AN INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY AND CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR ADULTS AND FAMILIES WITH AUTISM

ACES initiatives are supported by the two organizations that work for and with adults with autism in the Waterloo-Wellington region. Through ACES we are taking early steps towards our vision of an intentional community that will include land-based work. The ACES Management Committee consists of Moira & Roger Hollingsworth, Nancy Cherry, Ted McCartney, and Gerry Bloomfield (chair).

1. We have adopted a name for our vision and current activities. ACES is an acronym:

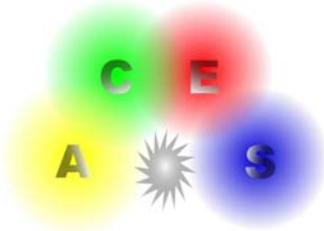
A stands for Autism, Adults, Asperger's, Abilities, Attitudes, Accessibility

C stands for Centre, Creative, Circles, Community, Co-operation, Conservation, Communication, Confidence

E stands for Empathy, Energy, Excellence, Experience, Expertise, Ecology

S stands for Self-Directed, Supports, Spectrum, Safety, Stability, Social Skills

ACES suggests top quality, and the diversity of people interested in supporting and developing the abilities of adults with ASD. Brian Henson has designed a logo for ACES.



2. Land-Based Voluntary Work Initiatives

a) Following meetings with the director of the Ignatius Jesuit Centre of Guelph, a formal agreement of co-operation was signed covering all our group's activities at this site. GSA is also providing insurance coverage.

b) Ted McCartney has led and represented us in this area. He keeps everyone informed of opportunities to volunteer, and is our main contact person with the land manager and farm manager at Ignatius.

c) We were given responsibility for clearing and maintaining the Ignatius Courtyard, and made it presentable by the Doors Open tour on April 23. Organic methods must be used.

d) Mulch was donated and delivered by an arborist contractor, and then spread on the Courtyard paths, on trails, and around the 1,500 newly-planted trees which some of us also helped to plant.

e) We have rented a small garden plot, so our young men can have the experience of growing vegetables.

f) Our voluntary activity in the gardens and grounds has begun to earn us a welcome place in the Ignatius/Orchard Park community—a valuable basis of trust for the future development of our vision.

2. Day Program Initiatives

- a) Moira Hollingsworth, supported by WWAS, has led us in setting up a Youth Day Program.
- b) It was decided to offer a youth day program one day a week for four young men aged 18-27.
- c) WWAS has taken financial responsibility—for contracting with a co-ordinator who is well qualified and an assistant, and leasing an Activities Room at Ignatius for one year. Families and friends have given furniture and equipment.
- d) Will Wycherley has volunteered some advice on the basis of years of experience working with adults with autism in England.
- e) Experience with direct group support might be expanded to include respite and summer programs in future.

3. ACES Role as Centre of Expertise and Resources

Our vision includes a wider community role as a centre of expertise and resources for people concerned with ASD, especially adults.

- a) The workshops in November 2004, which developed the vision for an intentional community, were an example of one kind of service that can be provided by such a centre.
- b) The Guelph Spring Conference on Creative Supports for Vulnerable Adults, held at Ignatius on April 29, also fits with this ACES role.
- c) ASPIRE, the project sponsored by both GSA and WWAS since 2002, has had a role that might be continued through ACES. Through ASPIRE, we are represented on various committees and working groups concerned with ASD or with developmental disabilities more generally. ASPIRE's current advocate, Nancy Cherry, attends policy meetings and discusses issues with government and agency staff. Nancy has compiled resources about the Transition to Adulthood.
- d) ACES, backed by GSA and WWAS, sponsors workshops and information meetings on various issues. Four current examples are on "gentle teaching," designing person-directed plans, financial and legal planning for people with special needs, and capacity assessment and substitute decision-making.

The OAARSN website and bulletins can be used to share information and resources.