

## Annual Research Day at the Mount

Members of the Alliance, Dr. Deborah Norris, Principal Investigator, Erin Power, Project Coordinator, and Priscilla Frenette, Graduate Research Assistant participated in Mount Saint Vincent University's Annual Research Day Open House in February 2009. Faculty and students alike had an opportunity to showcase their work at this event. This annual event is open to the public and community members are encouraged to drop by and learn about the diverse research projects that MSVU supports.



*Priscilla Frenette, Erin Power, Dr. Deborah Norris presenting a project poster during Research Day events.*

Thank you to the Maritime Data Centre for Aging Research and Policy Analysis and to the MSVU Research Office for printing the Alliance poster!

## A Profile of Alliance Members

### Kathleen MacPherson, M.D., Co-Principal Investigator



Kathleen MacPherson, co-principal investigator on the research project, is an Assistant Professor and Graduate Coordinator in the Department of Community Health & Epidemiology at Dalhousie University. She completed her undergraduate and medical degrees at Dalhousie University, and holds a Master of Public Health (Epidemiology and Gerontology) from the University of Michigan.

Kathy's primary research interests lie in the areas of functional and cognitive impairment, caregivers, and aging and disability. She has been an investigator on several research projects in these areas. She was previously involved as a co-investigator on a project entitled Age Related Transitions: Older Parents Caring for Adult Sons/Daughters with Lifelong Disabilities, which served as the foundation for the current project.

In addition to her dual roles in the Department of Community Health & Epidemiology, Kathy acts as a staff consultant on epidemiology and research design for the Queen Elizabeth II Health Sciences Centre and lectures at Dalhousie University medical school.

## People First Nova Scotia, Community Partner



John Cox is a community partner on the Alliance representing People First Nova Scotia. John acts as the Development Coordinator for People First Nova Scotia where he is responsible for developing new chapters as well as strengthening existing chapters of the organization. He has extensive experience both as a facilitator and advocate.

People First Nova Scotia represents Nova Scotians who have been labeled with an intellectual disability. It is made up of People First groups from across the province. People First Nova Scotia's goals are to promote equality for all people who have been characterized as having an intellectual disability, to help these individuals to speak for themselves and to make their own decisions, and to teach the community about this movement. People First provides leadership development, lobbies for social change, organizes local groups and focuses on important issues such as deinstitutionalization, community supports and legal rights.

## Cathy Crouse, Associate



Cathy Crouse is the Executive Director of the Metro Community Housing Association, a non-profit organization providing supportive housing to 165 people in the Halifax Regional Municipality who have experience with mental health issues. She is an Adjunct Professor with the Department of Family Studies and Gerontology at MSVU and has retained her connection to the IDSN Alliance and other research projects that were initiated when Cathy was the Executive Director of the Nova Scotia Centre on Aging.

Although Cathy is currently working for an agency providing mental health services, she has worked within the community-living field supporting people with intellectual disabilities for twenty years in the province of British Columbia, including nine years with the BC Association for Community Living. She has a Master's of Social Work degree from Dalhousie University and is a Registered Social Worker, as well as the current President of the Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers.

*"It is very important to have accurate information on current and future service needs. The concept of this research is to test a means to gather and analyze this information at the community level. Community based service providers and advocates will then be able to use the data to both plan for the future and secure necessary resources. Although it seems simple, it takes a great deal of commitment and coordination to create and maintain a data base of this kind. But we know that the effort will serve to empower individuals and their support networks." Cathy Crouse*

## Warm Welcomes and Fond Farewells

The Alliance would like to welcome its newest member, Priscilla Frenette. Priscilla joined the Alliance as the Project Assistant in December, 2008. She holds a Bachelor of Science (Honours) degree, a Diploma in Health Services Administration, and is currently enrolled as a Masters student in the Department of Community Health and Epidemiology at Dalhousie University.

Congratulations to Samantha Butler on her new position as Community Developer with the Halifax Regional Municipality! Samantha has been a community partner on the Alliance since February 2008 representing People First Nova Scotia. The Alliance would like to thank Samantha for her contributions and wish her the best of luck in all future endeavours!



## What have we been up to?

### Kudos

Congratulations to Dr. Deborah Norris, principal investigator, who will present a poster entitled 'Determining the prevalence of persons living with an intellectual disability in Nova Scotia' at the 10th World Down Syndrome Congress in Dublin, Ireland this coming August! Additionally, Dr. Norris will present her abstract 'Intellectual Disabilities Service Needs Research Alliance – Exploring the Current and Future Health and Social Service Needs of Adults Living with Intellectual Disability in Nova Scotia' at the St. Amant conference in Winnipeg, Manitoba this fall. These events will showcase the work of the Alliance, and will enable it to strengthen its national and international networks.

Congratulations to Priscilla Frenette, graduate research assistant, who will be presenting a poster at the 2009 Canadian Society for Epidemiology & Biostatistics National Student Conference. Priscilla was also recently awarded a Student Research Award by the Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation to support her graduate thesis work. Priscilla will be using data from the IDSN survey to explore issues related to health care access among individuals living with intellectual disabilities.

Congratulations to Dr. Brian Hennen and Dr. Deborah Norris who were awarded CIHR Community Support grants to cover expenses associated with their participation at the St. Amant Conference in October 2008!

### Central Region Data Collection

Data collection in the Central Region is set to begin shortly. Organizations that may be willing to participate in the administration of the survey are currently being contacted, and training of survey administrators will soon be underway. The participation of these service organizations is essential to meeting the goals of the Alliance. We look forward to working with them in the coming months!

### Thank you to Community Groups

Thank you to the **Continuing Care Association of Nova Scotia** and **DIRECTIONS Council for Vocational Services** for their recent financial contributions to the project. Donations support the Alliance in a diversity of project-related activities, including data collection, and analysis, stakeholder consultation, and ongoing awareness raising and education.

## In the Community

### March 2009

**Employment Conference 2009:** The Employment 2009 Steering Committee held its biennial conference aimed at improving the hiring climate for persons with intellectual disabilities in Nova Scotia. The sold-out event was held at the Holiday Inn Harbourview in Dartmouth and was a resounding success with more than 160 attendees!

### September/October 2009

**Conferences:** Alliance members are scheduled to participate in the following conferences: The 10th World Down Syndrome Congress, *Lifelong Living and Learning*, in Dublin, Ireland (August 19-22), The Interna-

tional Association for the Scientific Study of Intellectual Disabilities Health Issues Special Interest Research Group Conference, *International Collaboration to Improve the Health of Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities*, in Kingston Ontario (September 8-10), and the St Amant Conference, *Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities and Autism*, in Winnipeg, MB (October 8-9).

The Alliance will host its own conference October 13-15 to update the community on the progress of the project and to outline a direction for the future. Additional details will be provided as the date nears.

*Thank you to all the individuals and organizations who have offered their financial support, in-kind support, assistance, or interest to the Alliance.*

*A special thank you to our primary funding agency, the Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation, for their ongoing support and assistance.*



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