

**Mark Wallace**, Executive Director of Organizational Culture and International Partnerships

Each fall we take time to gather together (online when we must) and look back on the past year. We meet in each geographic area where we work to celebrate local “highs” and activities in our Annual Community Meetings (ACM's). As a charitable organization, we have certain requirements to keep people informed, but our Annual Community Meetings go much further. We want to engage in a meaningful way with people using services and their families, our community partners, and our many dedicated employees. ACM's are a wonderful time to not only remember and give thanks for the countless people that make our work possible, but to strengthen relationships and partnerships that will lead us into the future. As we look back at everything the past year has held – both its triumphs and its losses – coming *together* to remember is a powerful way to promote communities where everybody belongs.

- We share local stories of “Hope in Action” in people's lives and watch our Onward Video together [Link here](#)
- We review our finances and recognize the good work that has been possible thanks to resources from our government partners and generous donors.
- We remember those who have died in the past year and mourn their loss together.
- We celebrate excellence in our communities by presenting awards to those who have gone “above and beyond.” This past year, Excellence in Action awards included: Veterinarians who supported people to have healthy pets, Christian Horizons employees who made extra effort to express our core values, volunteers *with* and *without* disabilities who went the extra mile to make their community a welcoming place where people can use their gifts, and many partners in health care, government, churches, and community organizations that made success possible.

Ingrid Dykstra, Executive Director in our North District, described Annual Community Meetings as a time to “park the car and look in the rearview mirror at where we have been” before looking forward and driving into the future.

Ongoing reflection and celebration is a good practice for all of us as we consider what the coming year might hold. I encourage you to take some time to consider the following “Making the Connection” questions.

### Making the Connection

- What were some of highlights of this past year for you?
- What are some moments when:
  - People experienced our core values (*Valuing People, Fostering Belonging, Serving Others and Respecting Gifts*)
  - People directed their services
  - People experienced growth and development
  - People experienced communities of belonging
- What were some of the resources you were thankful for?
- What were some of the losses you experienced and how will you honour these losses?
- Who do you want to celebrate for their excellence?
  - Personal achievements
  - Partners who helped us achieve more than we could alone
  - Professionals who went the extra mile
  - Personal or community advocacy

If someone came to mind, let them know! Celebrating, grieving and being thankful are all important things as we work together in community.

### Additional Resources

Full videos of the Annual Community Meetings can be found on our YouTube channel here:  
[Click Here](#)

- [West](#)
- [East](#)
- [Central East](#)
- [Central](#)
- [North](#)
- [Saskatchewan](#)
- [South](#)

As we finish off 2021 and our theme of "Hope in Action" we are reminded of the great past we have to lean on, the resources we are blessed with and the bright future we envision before us.

- [Onward Video](#)
- [An Example of Excellence in Action](#)
- [2020-2021 Annual Report](#)