

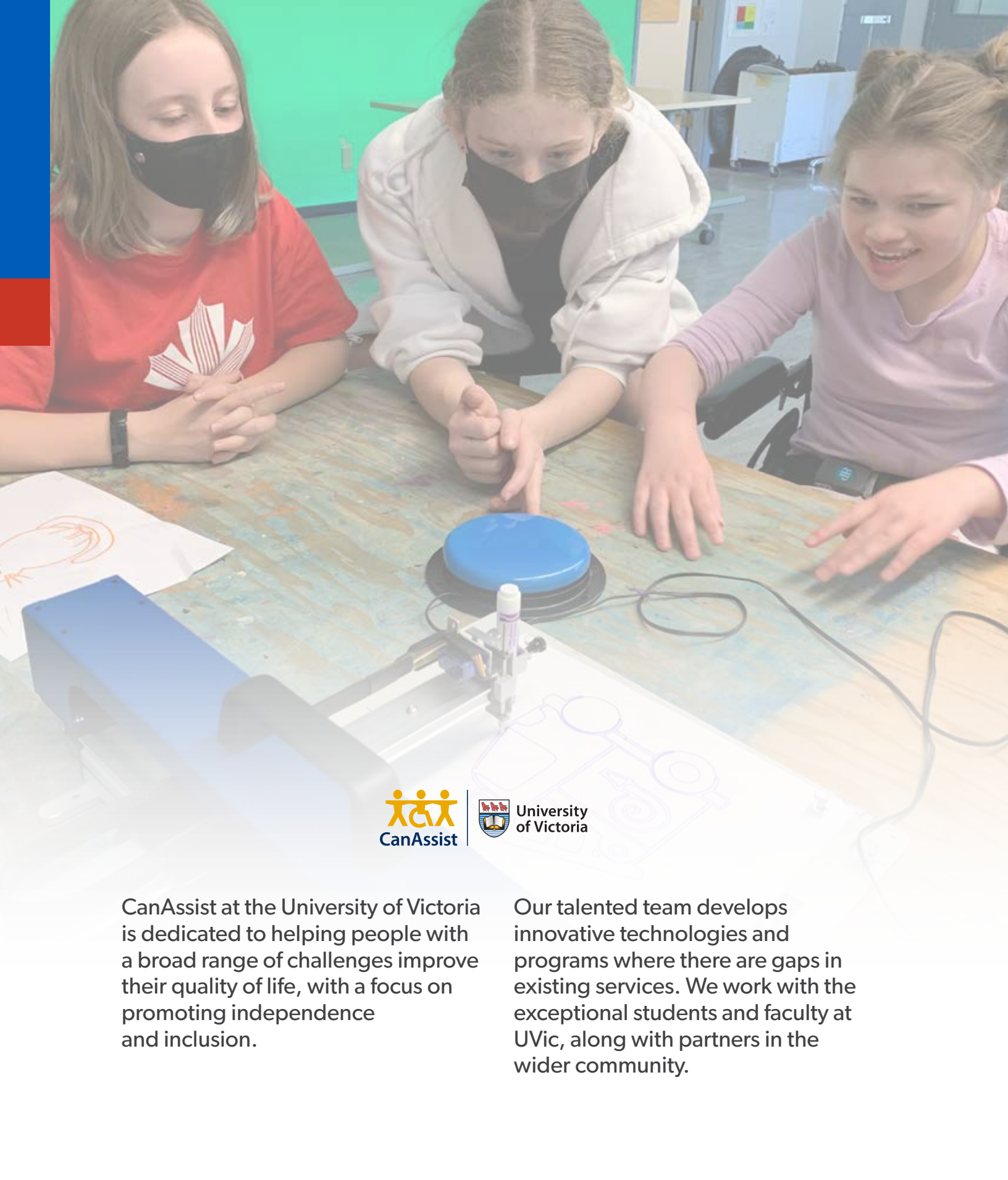


University
of Victoria



CanAssist:

2021-22 Impact Report



CanAssist at the University of Victoria is dedicated to helping people with a broad range of challenges improve their quality of life, with a focus on promoting independence and inclusion.

Our talented team develops innovative technologies and programs where there are gaps in existing services. We work with the exceptional students and faculty at UVic, along with partners in the wider community.

Table of Contents

Vision, Mission and Values.....	4
Message from the Executive Director	5
2021-22: Highlights	6
Our Supporters.....	7
Technology Development	8
Employment Programs	10
Academic Engagement.....	13
Inclusive Sports & Recreation Programming	13
Financial Information and Outlook.....	14
Thank You to Our Supporters	15

Vision, Mission and Values

Vision

CanAssist at the University of Victoria envisions a society where all people have the opportunity to participate, contribute, and reach their full potential.

Mission

CanAssist strives to be a highly respected national resource that collaborates with UVic researchers and students, as well as diverse external partners. We provide people who experience physical or cognitive barriers with innovative technologies, programs and services that address unmet needs and increase independence, inclusion and well-being.

Values

- Focus on clients
- Excellence
- Accountability
- Inclusion
- Passion



Message from the Executive Director

With challenges come new opportunities. As we reflect on the past year, I am pleased to report that CanAssist’s impact has grown. In the wake of the pandemic, our programs and technologies are more important than ever, reducing social isolation and supporting fuller, healthier lives for people living with mental and physical challenges.

CanAssist’s work touches people of all ages. Last year we secured a licensing agreement for CanAssist’s Toilet Step Stool, which has now been used at childcare centres by over 10,000 children. We also saw CanConnect (real-time video connection technology originally developed for seniors living with dementia) take on a new life when a Port Hardy group used it to support vulnerable seniors during the pandemic. And more participants than ever are joining CanAssist’s employment program, which addresses gaps in employment supports, allowing us to create a positive impact in the lives of youth aged 15-30 who identify as having a disability, or a mental health or substance use challenge.

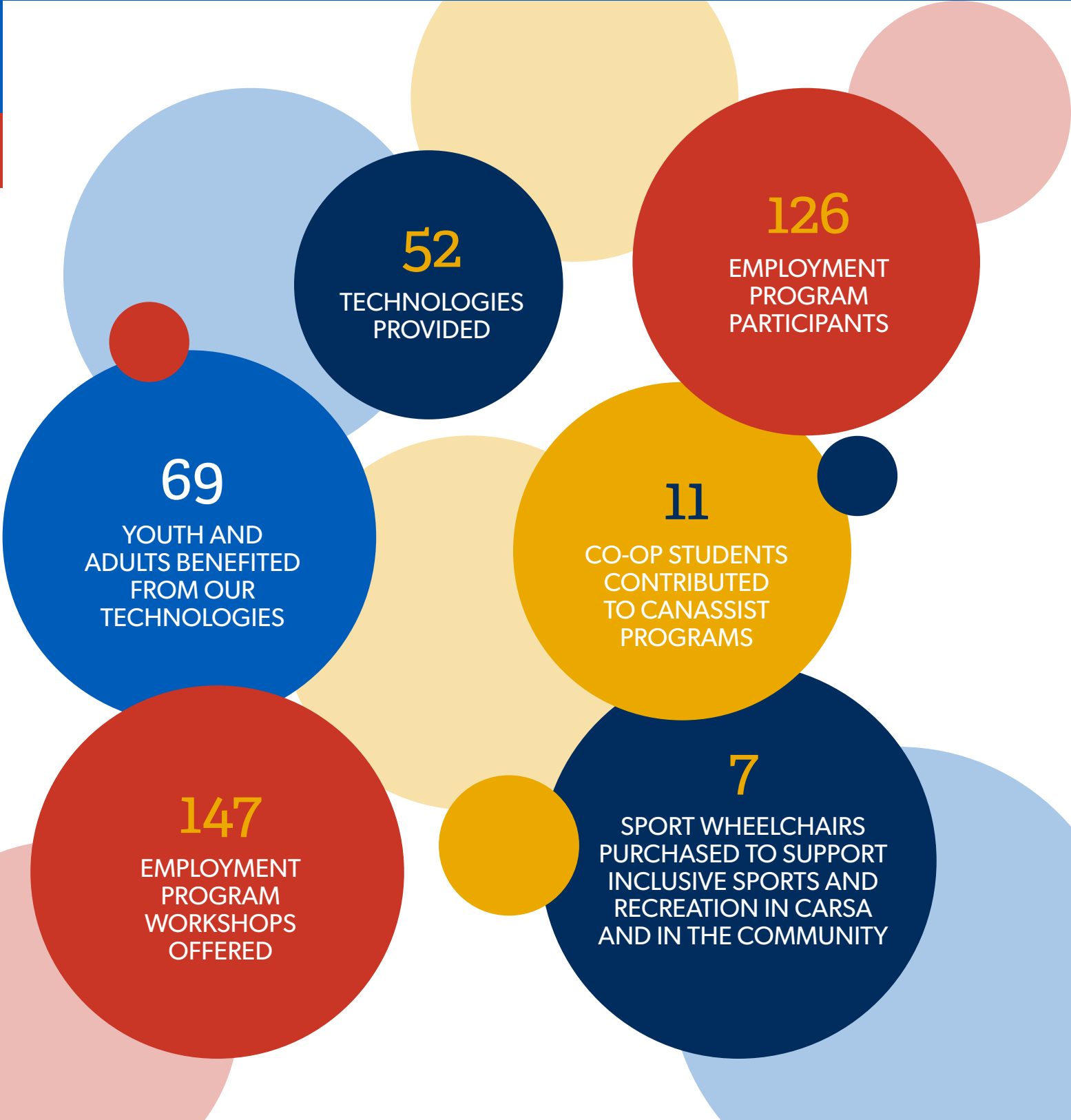
The spirit of resilience and determination embodied by CanAssist’s clients and program participants drives our work, and I am hopeful about the opportunities that lie ahead. I want to thank our growing network of donors and program funders, staff members, University of Victoria colleagues and partners. We are grateful for everyone who supports CanAssist’s mission to address unmet needs and foster independence, inclusion and well-being for people who experience barriers.

Robin Syme
Executive Director
CanAssist at the University of Victoria



◀ *“The Motivational Exerciser will be a huge benefit to our residents, enabling them to be more engaged and excited at the opportunity to exercise.”*

– Craig Reed, Administrator, Shannon Oaks - Oak Bay Independent Living.



Our Supporters

Kristy is a University of Victoria employee and CanAssist monthly donor who is also investing in the future of CanAssist through a gift in her will. This type of charitable donation allows you to leave a portion of your estate to the University of Victoria. By giving even a small amount, you can make a significant impact without using any of the money you need during your lifetime, while also reducing taxes on your estate.

“CanAssist is the best of the university: people all coming together to help the community,” she says. “The creativity is very inspiring. Everybody works to find a solution to allow participation and not have it limited by physical disability. There isn’t the idea that ‘we can’t do that.’ CanAssist finds a solution.”

If leaving a gift in your will interests you, contact Randy Gelling, CanAssist’s Development Officer at 250-853-3948 or canassistdev@uvic.ca.



In Memory of Dr. Djavad Mowafaghian

The Djavad Mowafaghian Foundation is a major supporter of CanAssist, providing investments that fuel the sustainability, reach and impact of our work. Dr. Mowafaghian, who created the Foundation, recently passed away at the age of 95. The vision of the Djavad Mowafaghian Foundation is to achieve immediate and lasting change in the lives of people, particularly children, through the improvement of health and the support of education.

We offer our condolences to Dr. Mowafaghian’s loved ones and colleagues, and we celebrate his legacy of generosity and compassion.

Technology Development

CanAssist's innovative technologies support people of all ages who experience a broad range of challenges, including physical, cognitive or mental health barriers. The technologies help our clients overcome challenges at home, at work and at leisure and allow them to focus on the future.

Accessible Art Interface

CanAssist's Accessible Art Interface is a motorized device which holds and moves an art instrument, such as a pen or a marker, across a piece of paper. It provides a multitude of ways for individuals to create art and allows users to explore artistic self-expression. It also helps educators and therapists provide an inclusive and accessible environment for creating art.

"My favourite feature of the art interface is how it can use a variety of art implements so easily, and how quick it is to swap them. I think that it will give the students a self-directed and accurate ability to draw, and to facilitate practice drawing on paper to learn to express themselves this way, with their peers, that they would not otherwise have."

– Stephanie, Provincial Inclusion Outreach Program



CanConnect

CanConnect is communication tool designed to help older adults, including those living with dementia, stay connected through an easy-to-use secure live video software application. The CanConnect device comprises two technologies: the CanConnect app and the Custom Case. The Custom Case enhances the ease of use and security of CanConnect. It restricts access to the broader functionality of the iPad and makes it possible for people with a wide range of barriers to reliably and independently access the app and connect with family and friends.

Partnership Spotlight:

Champions in Port Hardy implemented CanConnect to keep people safe and connected during the pandemic. CanAssist worked with the Hardy Bay Senior Citizens Society and a UVic-led research partnership (Staying Apart Together).

"Since CanConnect has entered our lives – the fact that it is no longer a phone call, but a face-to-face – has helped make spirits brighter, folks enjoy seeing one another and it has brought about lots of interaction between users. It is easy to use and that is a great benefit to seniors."

– Rosaline, Hardy Bay Senior Citizens Society



Employment Programs

CanAssist's employment programs have expanded this year to support people with disabilities who are at various life stages to secure paid employment and meaningful work experience. We now focus on youth living with self-declared challenges as follows:

- Attending high school (ages 15 to 19)
- Attending UVic (19+)
- Other adults in Victoria (19+)

Successful paid employment experiences change the life-trajectory of youth participants for the better, giving them and their families hope for the future.

Featured Participants

Jonathan, TeenWork

Jonathan joined CanAssist's TeenWork program in December 2019. With help from his job coach, Jonathan secured an Office Cleaner position at EverClean Facility Services in January 2021. Just four months after starting this job, Jonathan was nominated by five people and won Employee of the Month.

"My job coach helped me apply for jobs and prepare for the interview which made it less scary. She helped find an employer that recognizes my abilities and values me. I feel a sense of accomplishment and pride in the work I do. I also got a uniform, which I like as it makes me feel good."



Laura, AccessWork

Laura worked with her job coach, Tiffany, and found the one-on-one job coach support was instrumental in building her confidence in the workplace. "When I was referred to AccessWork, I was feeling overwhelmed with navigating my disability, being a mature student and needing to find work in a new city. Tiffany's approach was reassuring and encouraging, and it was such a relief to have that support," says Laura.

Laura was thrilled to apply and get hired for a casual position at the University of Victoria Gustavson School of Business, moderating online entrepreneurship classes in December 2021. She enjoyed interacting with students and instructors in the classes. "I got to build my confidence and learn how to use the university's online learning software."



Partnership Spotlight:

CanAssist collaborated with UVic Co-op and Career Services to implement a program, called CanWork, tailored to support UVic students with self-declared challenges during their work experiences. CanWork has been hugely successful for students requiring extra supports to be employed.

"...having [a Job Coach] that I could confide in with my anxiety about all the steps of the application process: how to follow up with an application via email, mock interviews, someone to talk to when you don't get the position, or a 'no.' It was this kind of support that I really valued."

– Daniella, CanWork participant

Research Partnership

CanAssist partners with UVic researchers on a Michael Smith Foundation Research Implementation Science grant. This study aims to improve the use of Assistive Technologies for older adults in BC. This work includes examining how CanConnect can improve social isolation, mental health concerns and the disruption of care networks among older adults and caregivers caused by COVID-19.



Academic Engagement

CanAssist works to increase awareness through inclusion and education in many ways, including providing University of Victoria students with experiential learning opportunities that help them connect directly with people living with disabilities and other challenges.

Featured participant: Amanda Glegg

Amanda is a Biomedical Engineering undergrad at the University of Victoria who completed a co-op term with CanAssist team working as a Mechanical Design Technician.

In her role, Amanda assisted with the mechanical aspects of product development at CanAssist, including design and fabrication. She is passionate about creating impactful technology.

"I have appreciated so much about my experience with CanAssist. It is amazing to have worked directly with clients this semester. Also, what an incredible feeling to know that somebody is out there using something I have made for them and that it's truly making an impact in their life!"



Inclusive Sports & Recreation Programming

The Centre for Athletics, Recreation and Special Abilities (CARSA) houses both Vikes Athletics and Recreation and CanAssist.

Since CARSA's doors opened in 2015, CanAssist and Vikes have worked together on inclusive athletic and recreational programming.

As a result of this partnership many people of all abilities have opportunities to participate in athletic and recreational activities – from blind soccer and inclusive dance to adapted strength training and wheelchair sports.

"With the help of CanAssist, Best Buddies planned and organized events that had not been offered before, with an overwhelming positive response from our members. These events helped expose participants to new ways to stay active, while having fun, in an incredibly supportive environment."

– Annika, Best Buddies Club Facilitator

Financial Information and Outlook

CanAssist began 2021-22 with \$7.4 million in multi-year project funding, enabling the organization to cover annual project expenses and operating costs of \$2.3 million. We achieved a modest positive balance for the fiscal year. Just over \$500,000 was raised through philanthropy, including grants and donations for technologies, the employment program and inclusive sports programming.

Fee-for-service contracts with organizations such as WorkSafeBC and royalties from CanAssist-created assistive technologies provided revenue, and we also expanded our consulting services.

CanAssist continues to develop partnerships with federal and provincial funding programs. Our employment program is primarily supported through federal funding, supplemented with philanthropic funding. We secured provincial funding for consulting projects to address gaps and unmet needs of vulnerable children, youth and young adults.

We also completed a significant technology development initiative called CanStayHome with provincial funding, which made it possible for CanAssist to develop new technologies to help keep seniors in their own homes as long as safely possible.



"Connecting with my son through video games has been a great experience for both of us, and we have an amazing time playing together."

– Bill pictured with his son, Miles.

Thank You to Our Supporters

The following is a list of key partners and donors that provided support to CanAssist during our 2021-22 fiscal year through charitable donations, fee-for-service work, in-kind contributions or other means. CanAssist is grateful to these organizations, as well as to our individual supporters who prefer to remain anonymous, for their generosity and vision.

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CKNW kids' fund

CWB

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University
of Victoria

CanAssist at the University of Victoria
CARSA, PO Box 1700, STN CSC
Victoria, BC Canada V8W 2Y2

Phone: 250.721.7300

Fax: 250.721.7299

Email: canassist@uvic.ca

www.canassist.ca

