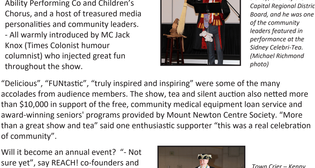
REACHing OUT!

Newsletter of West Coast Reach Association
June, 2026
Building Community Through Performing Arts

In This Issue

- *REACH!* Sidney Celebri-Tea Celebrates Community
- Downloadable National Anthem Performed by *REACH!*
- Unique All-Abilities Open Mic Brings Pure Joy
- Our "We Are One! 2025" Show is Now Online
- REACH! Performing Mentorship Program
- Special Thanks and Support
- In Our Next Issue
- Contact Information

REACH! Sidney Celebri-Tea Celebrates Community



REACH! performers and audience members at the Sidney Celebri-Tea Benefit Concert in May. (Michael Richmond photo)

"Let's do something different this spring" said Anne-Marie (Brimacombe), REACH! Artistic Director. The Sidney Celebri-Tea was born. On Sunday, May 24th a capacity crowd gave a standing ovation to REACH! and guest performers in the Mary Winspear Centre in Sidney. Having enjoyed a scrumptious tea laden with freshly prepared savouries and sweets, audience members were then treated to highly entertaining and heartfelt performances by REACH! Diverse-Ability Performing Co and Children's Chorus, and a host of treasured media personalities and community leaders. - All warmly introduced by MC Jack Knox (Times Colonist humour columnist) who injected great fun throughout the show.

Cliff McNeil-Smith in costume for his presentation on Harry Potter. Cliff is Mayor of Sidney, Chair of the Capital Regional District Board, and he was one of the community leaders featured in performance at the Sidney Celebri-Tea. (Michael Richmond photo)

"Delicious", "FUNtastic", "truly inspired and inspiring" were some of the many accolades from audience members. The show, tea and silent auction also netted more than $10,000 in support of the free, community medical equipment loan service and award-winning seniors' programs provided by Mount Newton Centre Society. "More than a great show and tea" said one enthusiastic supporter "this was a real celebration of community".

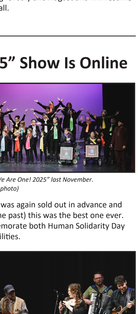
Will it become an annual event? "- Not sure yet", say REACH! co-founders and producers Anne-Marie and Peter Brimacombe while smiling. "Maybe we'll try something totally different again next spring. We'll keep you posted!"

Town Crier – Kenny Podmore, officially opened the show with his formal proclamation. (Michael Richmond photo)

Downloadable National Anthem Performed by REACH!

Our REACH! Performing Co had the honour of opening the Canada Day celebrations last year for thousands in front of the legislative buildings in Victoria, with our version of the Canadian National Anthem. A music video with REACH! performers singing "O Canada" has also been produced which viewers have described as both timely and touching.

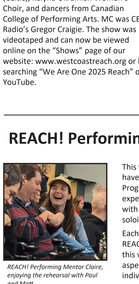
The music video exemplifies inclusion and contains captions, with lyrics in both national languages, and instrumental accompaniment provided by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Signage includes principles that so many Canadians hold dear, including "One Country, Many Cultures", "Better Together" and "Glorious and Free". It can be viewed and downloaded by searching YouTube "O Canada by REACH!". Organizations can also download and use this for free to open their special events on an inspirational note.



REACH! performers at the legislative buildings during the filming of their music video of our National Anthem. (Peter Brimacombe photo)

Unique ALL ABILITIES OPEN MIC Brings Pure Joy

An exciting new program jointly launched this year by REACH! in partnership with Garth Homer Society is as unique as it is successful. It is Victoria's only All-Abilities, All-Ages Open Mic Coffee House. Held twice monthly at the former SJ Willis School building in Victoria, the Open Mic has included amazing presentations from first timers to professionals, from five year-olds to seniors in their 80s. Admission is free as a community service, and refreshments are available at very reasonable prices.

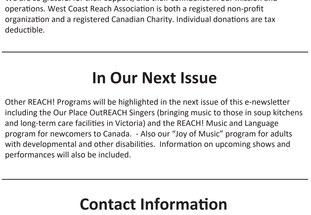


Standup comedian Curran Dobbs was one of the featured performers at our All-Abilities, All-Ages Open Mic Coffee House. He was also a finalist on the Canada's Got Talent television show. Curran is on the autism spectrum and much of his humour revolves around that. (Sameer Rodriguez photo)

REACH! Board member Rahel Umpherson, has been a leading volunteer and has been thrilled with the response, the diversity of performances and the inclusive and supportive environment. "Original music and popular standards, story-telling, comedy, karaoke… we've had it all" says Rahel. "Many have never had this opportunity to perform for others, and everybody gets a lot of love. It's also a great night of entertainment for audience members who get to experience the fun and joy first hand."

The Open Mic sessions average about 60 participants and have been enthusiastically received since starting in October. They are breaking for July and August and will resume in the Fall.

Our "We Are One! 2025" Show Is Online



REACH! performers in the finale number of "We Are One! 2025" last November. (Samuel Navarrete photo)

Our "We Are One!" annual show last November was again sold out in advance and many audience members said (as they have in the past) this was the best one ever. REACH! produces this show each year to commemorate both Human Solidarity Day and the International Day of Persons With Disabilities.

In addition to REACH! performers, the show included outstanding sets by Caleb Hart (Caribbean), Hounds of Cuchulain (Celtic), Kalyna Ukrainian Women's Choir, and dancers from Canadian College of Performing Arts. MC was CBC Radio's Gregor Craigie. The show was videotaped and can now be viewed online on the "Shows" page of our website: www.westcoastreach.org or by searching "We Are One 2025 Reach" on YouTube.

Members of the Celtic band, "Hounds of Cuchulain", were just one of the wonderful guest performing groups for the show. (Samuel Navarrete photo)

REACH! Performing Mentorship Program

REACH! Performing Mentor Claire, enjoying the rehearsal with Poul and Matt. (Tony Belcher photo)

This year seven young performers (i.e. 20-35 years) have been part of the REACH! Performing Assistant Program. All are keen singers interested in the experience of working with, and assisting those with diverse abilities. They are also featured as soloists in REACH! performances.

Each has developed strong bonds with other REACH! members and all have said they are loving this very unique opportunity. This is just one aspect of REACH! made possible by support from individuals and foundations.

Special Thanks and Support

Approximately 300 people including many considered marginalized, are empowered through REACH! programs annually. Many in turn, inspire thousands each year through their REACH! performances. REACH! programs and performances are made possible thanks to generous support from individual donors and families plus:

Victoria Foundation
Dobinson Foundation
Norgaard Foundation
Walsh Foundation.

We are so grateful for their support, and their confidence in our mission and operations. West Coast Reach Association is both a registered non-profit organization and a registered Canadian Charity. Individual donations are tax deductible.

In Our Next Issue

Other REACH! Programs will be highlighted in the next issue of this e-newsletter including the Our Place OutREACH Singers (bringing music to those in soup kitchens and long-term care facilities in Victoria) and the REACH! Music and Language program for newcomers to Canada. - Also our "Joy of Music" program for adults with developmental and other disabilities. Information on upcoming shows and performances will also be included.

Contact Information

For full information on REACH! please visit our website at: www.westcoastreach.org
QUESTIONS? Email: westcoastreach@gmail.com

Thank you for your interest in us!

WEST COAST REACH ASSOCIATION
First Floor, 722 Cormorant St
Victoria, BC V8W 1P8
Email: westcoastreach@gmail.com **Tel.** 250-889-0871
Website: www.westcoastreach.org