



## Government of Yukon

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July 11, 2011



### Bridges Café expands its services

WHITEHORSE—A creative idea by two mental health support workers to provide meaningful work for their clients is paying off.

In the summer of 2009, Bridges Café in Shipyards Park began as a one day a week summer-long lunchtime opportunity for clients of Mental Health Services to gain practical skills and experience, as well as interact with the public.

"The Bridges Café initiative was extremely successful," Health and Social Services Minister Glenn Hart said. "As a result, the program was extended throughout the fall and winter."

With the support of Advanced Education's Labour Market funds, the café was able to expand its services into the fall and winter of 2010. When it became clear that Mental Health Services could no longer appropriately support the growing popularity of the café without professional help, it turned to Challenge Community Vocational Alternatives to assume the management of the café, which it did in October 2010. A contribution agreement allows Challenge to pay the employees, purchase supplies and advertise. In addition, Challenge clients have been given the opportunity to work in the café.

"The café has provided excellent employment experience for Challenge's clients, as well as clients of Mental Health Services," Executive Director of Challenge Rick Goodfellow said.

The café provides clients with an opportunity to ease back into the workforce and contribute their skills, earn money and interact with their work colleagues.

"The benefits of the café go beyond earning money," Goodfellow added. "The café decreases social isolation and decreases dependence on Mental Health Services. The workers are making real friends and providing a real service. It's win-win."

Bridges Café is open weekdays from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

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