

# **Blooming Acres**

www.bloomingacres.com

## **B l o o m i n g   A c r e s**

Blooming Acres is a residential community for children, teenagers and adults diagnosed with multiple and complex special needs. We accommodate individuals with disorders such as Autism, Asperger's Syndrome, Pervasive Developmental Disorders, Cognitive and Developmental Disabilities, Tourette Syndrome, Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity) Disorder, Learning Disabilities, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, and Mood and Anxiety Disorders. Often the individuals we support are deemed hard to serve and hard to place due to the complexity of their needs.

We offer Residential Care, Respite, Educational Day Programmes, and a Summer Camp. We have two locations in Simcoe Country, both outside Barrie, Ontario Canada - 45 minutes north of Toronto.



*[Click Here for a virtual tour of Blooming Acres Farm](#)*

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Howard M. Bloom - *MEd, PhD candidate*  
**Educational and Behavioural Consultant**  
**Workshop and Conference Presenter**

Since 1991 I have supported thousands of complex children, their families, and caregivers in a variety of settings that include residential camps, at school, in the home, and as a presenter at conferences and workshops.

As a consultant, I provide educational, recreational, and behaviour management training and programme development for caregivers who support individuals diagnosed as having Autism,

Aspergers Syndrome, Tourette Syndrome, Attention Deficit Disorder, Learning Disabilities, Obsessive Compulsive Disorders and other special needs. In addition to consultation, I am the Co-Executive Director of Blooming Acres, a children's residence that supports individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders and other special needs. Blooming Acres offers residential care, respite, a summer camp, and a private special needs school.

*Special needs individuals, their teachers, caregivers and families positively benefit from experienced and professional consultation.*

I offer experienced and professional consultation and instruction to develop positive learning opportunities in areas such as:

- Behaviour Management
- Life Skills
- Social Skills
- Vocational Skills
- Recreational Programming
- Academic Instruction
- Family Support
- Staff Training

## **T h e B l o o m i n g A c r e s F a r m**

The Blooming Acres Farm is a ten bed licensed residence situated on 100 acres of land in beautiful Oro Medonte, Ontario. Our flagship estate consists of an 8500 sq ft. spacious farm house, with a variety of recreation, academic and leisure rooms for our guests to enjoy. The home offers each resident his/her own bedroom. The farm is complimented by a variety of livestock (in the barn) and is ensconced in a picturesque country setting. Our farm is fully operational and raises food for our two facilities.

## **B l o o m i n g A c r e s S n o w V a l l e y L o d g e**

Blooming Acres Snow Valley Lodge is a seven bed 6000sq.ft. licensed care home located twenty minutes from our farm, in Springwater Ontario (outside Barrie). The Lodge is situated on a 2 acre wooded lot with stunning views that overlook the Vespera Valley and Collingwood. The spacious lodge was completed.

## **O u r P h i l o s o p h y M i s s i o n & V a l u e s**

Our mission is to build a supportive and caring community and to guide our learners to reach their full potential through planned and impromptu skills instruction.

## **P h i l o s o p h y & A p p r o a c h**

We aim to establish positive relationships while living together in a supportive community environment. Our talented and caring staff utilizes a home-education model to respond to each learner's specific educational, social and vocational needs. This child-centred, experiential learning pedagogy allows the student to guide us, as their teacher-educators, to and through their own personal curriculum.

We also embrace a strong belief in positive and proactive behaviour management, Applied Behaviour Analysis and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy.

## **C h i l d - C e n t r e d   A p p r o a c h   t o   L e a r n i n g**

Our aim is to empower our students to make choices for themselves. Individual needs vary based on their social, neurological and intellectual abilities and interests.

We collaborate with our students, their families, and other support networks to identify the optimum learning situation. Together, we create a customized, academic “curriculum” that both respects their interests and challenges them.

## **R e s p i t e   &   R e t r e a t s**

Blooming Acres offers relaxing, educational, and therapeutic weekday, weekend and school holiday respite and retreats. This is an excellent opportunity to meet friends, learn new skills and have fun. Respite also allows everyone to have a little well-deserved R&R.

To speak with our staff about our availability, fees and to book respite, please call our farm (705)733-8785 or email us at [info@bloomingacres.com](mailto:info@bloomingacres.com) renovated and opened

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Activities may include for example, reading, writing and arithmetic, social, recreation, leisure and life skill development, cooking and baking, music, science, history and social studies, exploring nature and working with our livestock.

We also encourage our students to engage in the wider community in an active, hands-on way. Many of our learners work in co-op or paid supportive placements with local businesses. We also offer a comprehensive recreational programme at our local YMCA and within the variety of local municipal and provincial park settings.

## **L i f e   S k i l l s   T r a i n i n g**

Supported by understanding and experienced staff, Blooming Acres guests assist with menu planning, budgeting, cooking, cleaning, laundry and the myriad of other chores involved in operating a household and living and learning in community.

## **S o c i a l   S k i l l s   T r a i n i n g**

We nurture personal growth through planned and impromptu social skills instruction. Our staff is always aware of “teachable moments” for social skills enhancement. In this area we focus on communication, peer on peer interaction, independence and living in community in a respectful and productive way.

## **T h e   R e c r e a t i o n a l   E x p e r i e n c e**

Recreation is one of the keys to having a fun, learning experience. Blooming Acres activities include arts and crafts, swimming, music, nature, hiking, biking, days off, town-nights and of course, rest and relaxation. We are always mindful of individual, vocational, and communication requirements and provide the amount of support needed for individual success.

There are a variety of farm animals at Blooming Acres Farm. These include (always evolving) cows, goats, chickens, pigs, and even a Llama; other new animals are always arriving. We also grow our own produce and crops.

Supported by experienced staff, our guests participate in the day-to-day operation of our “not so traditional” farm. Supervised activities include gardening, barn chores, planting and harvesting crops, tending livestock, attending market and agricultural auctions, and of course, eating the fruits of our labour!

## **B e h a v i o u r a l P r o g r a m m e s**

We match behavioural intervention to individual needs and abilities. The focus is always to reduce problematic behaviour, increase desired positive behaviour and to teach and motivate our learners to live peacefully and productively in community, with as much independence or support as is possible and required. To accomplish this we integrate programmes such as:

- Applied Behaviour Analysis
- Cognitive Behaviour Therapy
- Special Education
- Social Stories
- PIC Communication
- Contingency Management
- Extinction
- Functional Analysis
- Positive and Proactive Behaviour Management
- Safe Management
- Non-Violent Crisis Prevention and Intervention
- Child-Centred Learning in July 2007.

## **Farm converted to home for special-needs clients**

By Julie DeBruin, Barrie Advance, August 28, 2007

<http://www.barrieadvance.com/barrieadvance/article/45576>

*From the laneway, Blooming Acres looks just like an ordinary farm.*

Aside from the llama, a gift from a friend, who shares the field with several beef cows, there is nothing that hints this place is a little different than its neighbors in picturesque Oro-Medonte Township.

Howard Bloom and his wife Sherri-Ann purchased the rambling old farmhouse with its old wooden bank barn and 100 acres of fields and bush with the idea of raising their family in the country. It has become a home for more than a dozen teens with complex special needs.

"This is our ninth year living here," said Bloom from the family's kitchen. They have their own living quarters inside the large house which they share with their two children. The other side has room for up to 10 clients and 15 staff members at any given time.

Before moving to the farm, the couple lived in a small condo in Toronto.

For several years, they would take trips out to the countryside, looking for the perfect place. They found their diamond in the rough in Oro-Medonte Township between Barrie and Orillia. It was close to both Toronto and Muskoka. The original farmhouse and the property were in need of some attention, so the first thing to do was to renovate. "We put all our stuff in storage and renovated it," said Bloom. Because of the couple's previous work with special-needs children, they started getting requests to have children and teens come up for the weekend to give their caregivers a break. "Before we knew it, we had four or five kids here most weekends.

"It was great. It was another opportunity for kids, especially those with autism."

The guests enjoyed the quiet country atmosphere, families were given a much-needed break and the Blooms were eventually able to expand the respite care into a unique summer program for young people with complex and often multiple special needs.

It started with a summer camp program that has grown into a year-round residential program for 10 people at a time. The gradual expansion of the program meant that an addition was required, so work began to expand the building into a 5,000-square-foot building and ensure they met all building code requirements. They decided to keep the homey, farm style of the original home in the addition, which features wide plank flooring and a large stone fireplace.

Several years ago, families of these clients began discussing how they would be able to access funding to pay for the one-on-one care. To be able to do that, the centre had to become licensed under the Ministry of Community and Social Services. It is still privately run but families are now able to apply for funding. In the past, parents had to give up the rights to their children if they needed to find a residential alternative for them, but that has changed. Families are encouraged to be involved in their child's progress and a number of them go home on weekends.

The Blooms also have three respite beds for short-term stays, and the farm still offers a summer camp program. They have a one-to-one staff to client ratio and individual programs are developed for each client.

"They stay as long as they are gaining something here," said Bloom. They work with families to develop goals for the clients. The farm became in such high demand, a waiting list had to be started. "We get a call almost every day," said Howard. "We're full."

Earlier this year, after two years of searching, the Blooms found a second property about 20 minutes from the first. Snow Valley Lodge is a 6,000-square-foot, seven-bedroom home on a two-acre property within walking distance of Snow Valley ski resort.

“It was a massive house, but in need of a complete retrofit.”

At one time, it had been converted into a series of apartments, but the building stood empty for several years. “There were lots of bedrooms and bathrooms ... and the location was right,” said Bloom. They spoke to the neighbors and answered questions about the program and the township was supportive. “They wanted to see the building fixed up,” said Bloom.

The new property was acquired last January and has undergone extensive renovations to meet all provincial zoning, building code and fire regulations. The lodge will soon be home to seven individuals with complex and multiple special needs. It also houses a bigger main office, and between the two properties, they provide work for 30 staff members.

The Blooms decided that while their energies are focused on meeting the needs of the clients they serve, they also wanted to maintain a farm environment.

A small flock of hens supplies the family with fresh eggs, and they also raise turkeys and chickens for meat that are used to feed everyone on the farm. “The kids are part of that process,” said Bloom.

“At the table, they know where their food comes from.” Most years, he also keeps a large vegetable garden. They used to have a larger herd of cattle and did raise pigs, goats and sheep for several years, but cut back on the livestock as the residential care side expanded. A neighboring farmer hays the property. Now that the second facility is nearing completion, the Blooms have their sights set on a new project. In an effort to keep up with demand, they are starting to the future again. This time, they’re looking at the idea of creating an adult day program for high-needs individuals, possibly in Barrie, that would include a recreational therapeutic aspect. They realize it could be challenging to find the right place for their program, but that isn’t stopping them.

“We dream. We plan. We make it happen,” said Bloom. “It was a big risk to move out of Toronto to a big derelict farmhouse.” While Sherri-Ann is a country girl, he was a city boy and there was a lot to country living he didn’t know. “You learn very quickly.”

For more information on Blooming Acres and the programs it runs, check out our Website:

<http://www.bloomingacres.com>