

Disability IN FOCUS

The newsletter of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities

Summer 2011
The RECREATION Issue

06 Push to Open Nature Initiative

*Everyone Belongs
Outside. Especially
in Alberta's
Provincial Parks.*



08 Custom Fun
for Everyone

11 Seeing
Without Seeing

15 Recreation
in the Hat

About the

PREMIER'S COUNCIL on the Status of Persons with Disabilities

The Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities is committed to working towards an inclusive, barrier-free society where every Albertan has the opportunity and choice to participate in school, in the workplace, and in the community.

The Council produces *Disability in Focus*, which is available upon request in alternative formats including large print, audiotape, text only and Braille. *Disability in Focus* is also available electronically and online.

The Secretariat supporting the Council includes:

LOUISE BUTLER
Director

DIANE BERGERON
Manager, Coordination
and Council Initiatives

BONNIE EDWARDS
Coordinator

GINGER WOEPPEL
Administrative Assistant

Vision

Alberta is an inclusive and barrier-free society.

Mission

The mission of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities is to advise on, report to, and make recommendations to the Government of Alberta on matters relating to the opportunity for full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in the life of the Province. It does this by listening to the opinions of the disability community, communicating these ideas and concerns to the Government of Alberta and the broader community, and working with governments, community organizations, and other stakeholders towards solutions.

Premier's Council Members

CHAIR

Marlin Styner Red Deer

DEPUTY CHAIR, MLA BONNYVILLE

Genia Leskiw Cold Lake

MEMBERS

Dan Bojarski St. Brides

Bryce Clarke Ardrossan

Mike Hambly Calgary

Dr. John Latter Calgary

Austin Mardon, C.M. Edmonton

Diane Ridley Thorsby

Brad Robertson Calgary

Amber Skoog Picture Butte

Kuen Tang Edmonton

Pamela Wagner Medicine Hat

Carmen Wyton St. Albert

More details about the history, members, and work of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities are available at:

www.seniors.alberta.ca/PremiersCouncil

What do you think of our newsletter?

Please send comments or questions to Bonnie Edwards at:

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Table of CONTENTS

Feature Articles



06

Push to Open Nature Initiative
*Submitted by Don Carruthers
Den Hoed*

Photo Credit: BC/MCS Vancouver



08

Custom Fun for Everyone
Submitted by Bryce Clarke



09

Success at the
Special Olympics



10

Blind Behind the Wheel
*Submitted by Annie
Parkinson*



11

Sawing Without Seeing
Submitted by Mike Hambly

15

Recreation in the Hat
Submitted by Pamela Wagner

16

Success, One Strike at a Time
Submitted by Diane Ridley

Messages, Events

- 04 Message from the Chair
- 04 Message from the Deputy Chair
- 05 Message from the Minister
- 12 Premier's Council Awards: Awarding Outstanding Leaders
- 13 International Day of Person's with Disabilities Highlights 2010

What effects do you think poverty has had on accessibility?

Please send comments or questions to Bonnie Edwards at:

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Message from the
CHAIR



Now that the warmer weather is upon us, the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities, was thinking about the variety of recreation and leisure activities that Alberta has to offer. These activities can add to a person's quality of life. In line with the Council's vision, Alberta is an inclusive and barrier-free society, Council wants persons with disabilities to be able to access activities of their choice. And that's the theme for this edition - recreation and leisure activities.

To begin with though, some notes of thanks and welcome are necessary. I want to take this opportunity to express my appreciation for MLA Verlyn Olson's contributions to the Council's plans and activities. Until February 2010, Mr. Olson was Council's Deputy Chair and resigned when he was appointed as

the new Minister of Justice and Attorney General and chair of the government's Legislative Review Committee.

I am pleased that MLA Genia Leskiw is our new Deputy Chair. I am certain that Mrs. Leskiw will work closely with the Council as we continue to listen to the interests and concerns of people with disabilities in Alberta. The Deputy Chair is the liaison from Council to the government and provides the Council's advice to the government.

Council aims to improve the lives of persons with disabilities by spending more time in the disability community, listening to what is important from Albertans, and communicating this information to the Government of Alberta. With input from the community, Council is able to fulfill our role of providing advice to the Government of Alberta.

My wishes for a happy and healthy summer to you all! ■

MARLIN STYNER
*Chair, Premier's Council
on the Status of Person's
with Disabilities*

Message from the
**DEPUTY
CHAIR**



It is my honour to have been appointed the Deputy Chair of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. Though I have only been working with Council members for a short time, I am both impressed and excited by the dedication, knowledge, and drive of this team—it shows not only the strength of this organization, but it is an expression of this province's commitment to the continued contribution, support, and growth of Albertans living with disabilities.

Albertans are our greatest resource, and the spirit and work of this Council is a shining example of what we have and are yet to achieve. I would like to thank our Chair, Mr. Marlin Styner, fellow Council members, and our staff for their enthusiasm and help in making me feel a part of this esteemed organization.

Message from the
MINISTER

I look forward to building upon what is truly a strong base and working together with our government and all Albertans to ensure that the lives of persons with disabilities are lived and recognized to the fullest. ■

GENIA LESKIW

MLA Bonnyville–Cold Lake



I hope you enjoy this latest issue of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities' Disability in Focus newsletter. As the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports, I am pleased with the Council's commitment to working with Albertans in communities, in businesses and around government to share best practices on Universal Design. The Council's work helps our province better meet the needs of people with disabilities so they can participate fully in their communities.

This newsletter's theme of recreation and leisure is timely as our Alberta summer approaches, a season for all Albertans to enjoy the many beautiful gifts our province has to offer. In addition to providing people with many opportunities to participate in their communities, recreation enhances physical and mental health and improves quality of life.

The newsletter has ideas to celebrate the many ways people with disabilities participate in activities, contribute their skills and feel a sense of belonging and accomplishment as a result of their involvement. Leisure and recreation activities provide an opportunity for all of us to meet people, relax and enjoy our lives.

Our government is removing barriers to recreation for people with disabilities. An example of this important work is Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation's Push to Open initiative, which supports the participation of all people in park experiences and programs, regardless of ability.

I hope you have an opportunity to enjoy the many recreational opportunities available in Alberta and I look forward to seeing continued progress on creating an inclusive and barrier-free Alberta. ■

Honourable

MARY ANNE JABLONSKI

*Minister of Seniors
and Community Supports*

Push to Open Nature Initiative

Everyone Belongs Outside. Especially in Alberta's Provincial Parks.

Someone with a spinal cord injury can climb a mountain. Someone blind can take in the view. Someone with a brain injury can be a leader.

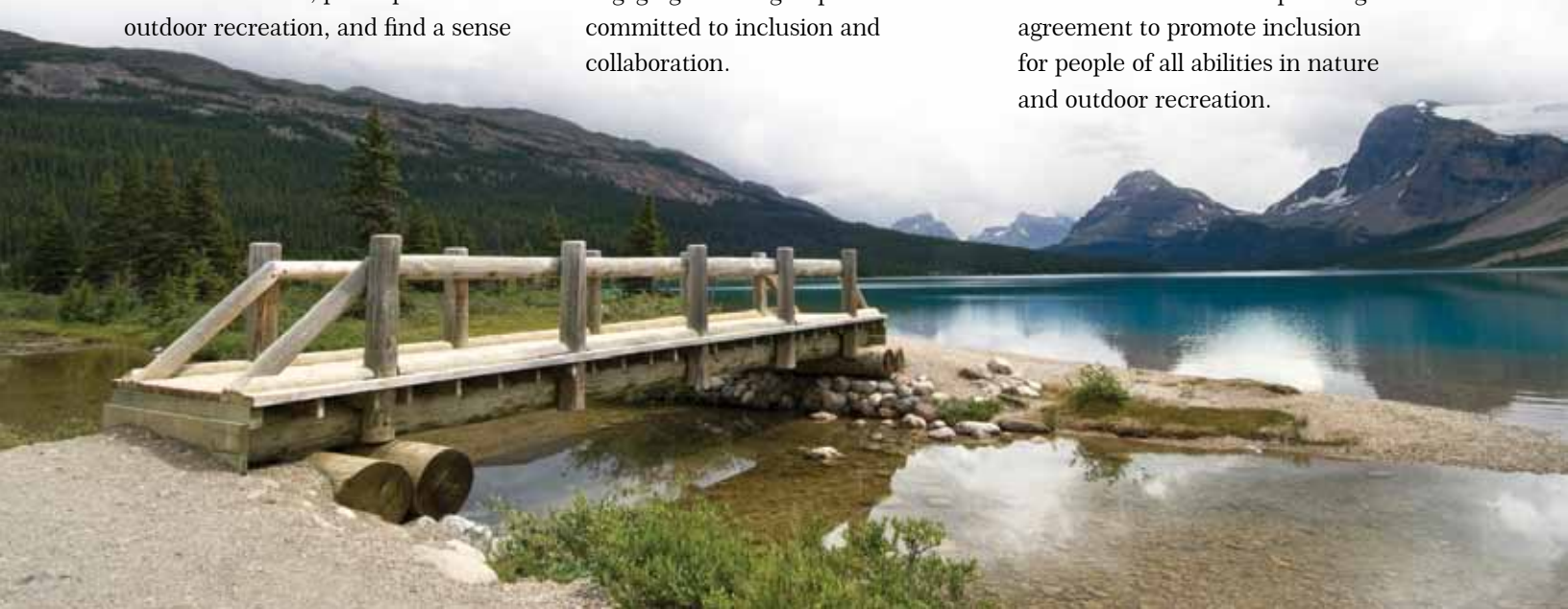
The Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation *Push to Open* Nature initiative is making inclusion a reality throughout Alberta's provincial parks. Thanks to thousands of hours of volunteer time, dozens of partner agencies, and the support of corporate partners Encana Natural Gas and Cenovus Energy, we were able to prove that any barrier can be overcome through teamwork, innovation, passion, and caring. The *Push to Open* Nature initiative is about ensuring all people can use their abilities to connect with the natural world, participate in outdoor recreation, and find a sense

of belonging with a community of people from all backgrounds.

The 2010 programming year was incredibly rewarding as we expanded to include a new natural region and built on our success in the Rocky Mountains. Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation is building on the legacy of sites, such as the William Watson Lodge, and learning from the expertise of agencies like the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities and the Eagle-Point-Blue-Rapids Park Council. Most of all, we are working with individuals across the province to create a new non-profit *Push to Open* Nature Society, and together we are making a difference. Together,

- We held *Push to Open* Dialogues across the province and expanded our community of practice by engaging diverse groups committed to inclusion and collaboration.

- We held the third Adaptive Kananaskis Challenge in Peter Lougheed Provincial Park, and the first Adaptive Parkland Challenge in Eagle Point Provincial Park and Blue Rapids Recreation Area. Both events were successful beyond our wildest expectations, with a five-day backcountry trip to the continental divide and inclusive off-highway vehicles in Alberta's parklands!
- We supported a new *Push to Open* Nature chapter in Red Deer with equipment for community awareness events, sharing ideas, and connecting passionate local agencies.
- We launched the *Push to Open* Nature Society, a charitable organization that will work with Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation under a co-operating agreement to promote inclusion for people of all abilities in nature and outdoor recreation.



While good news, all this pales in comparison to the impact the *Push to Open* Nature program has on its participants. For people often left inside, unable to connect with nature or with other people, outdoor experiences like the Adaptive Parkland Challenge make a huge difference. In the past year, we heard many comments from participants, such as:

“This is what true inclusion looks like! It really does exist, and out in nature!”

“Every time I am involved with a Push to Open event, it helps me work through issues and fears that hold me back in other parts of my life. It is the cheapest therapy ever!”

“Joanne, our TrailRider pilot, deserves the thanks. Without her courage to venture to new heights and to challenge what most people would deem impossible, we would not have had the opportunity to be part of something so powerful, so inspiring, and one of the best memories of our lives.”

“These are really not just adventures for people with disabilities, but for everyone to experience the healing power of nature in a new way, and gain some much-needed perspective.”

“Wow! What an amazing weekend! Thanks to everyone who made this trip possible, accessible, affordable, and FUN!”

“We strive to fit into a group...that’s what Push to Open means to us.”

Clearly, we are on to something! As we continue moving forward, we have exciting plans to build on our current success and maintain our momentum into the future. Over the next year, we hope to:

- Develop an online community of practice, a *Push to Open* Nature Network, to help adaptive recreation programs connect with individuals and each other, and to facilitate equipment, resource, and volunteer-sharing.

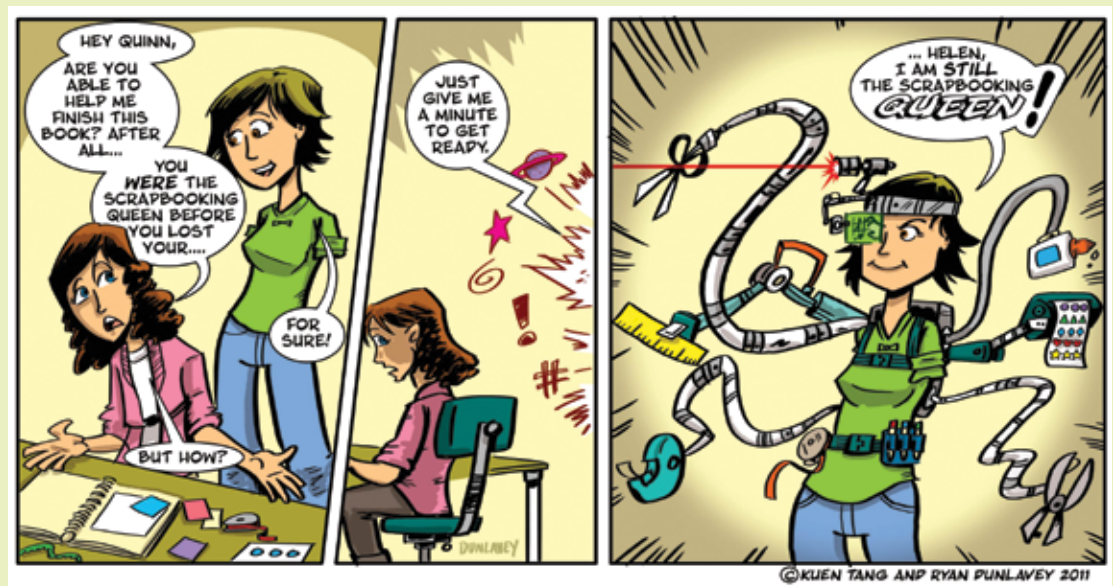
- Expand the Adaptive Kananaskis Challenge (on August 5–7) to include more communities in the region, host a second Adaptive Parkland Challenge (August 20–21), and work toward a third challenge by 2013.
- Share the *Push to Open* Nature experience through educational materials, research, programs and events, and by telling the story of inclusion.

Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation staff are finalizing the Plan for Parks Inclusion Strategy. *Push to Open* Nature is a great example of the vision for Alberta’s Parks to “inspire people to discover, value, protect, and enjoy the natural world and all the benefits it provides for current and future generations.” As we continue to implement the inclusion strategy, we will ensure that all people, of all abilities, are able to connect with Alberta’s natural spaces and be inspired. We will prove that everyone belongs outside.

For more information, visit www.albertaparks.ca/pushtoopen or email info@pushtoopen.ca. ■

Can Still Do

Submitted by
KUEN TANG,
Council Member



Custom Fun for Everyone

Find yourself searching for a recreational or leisure activity to participate in? Do you have a physical challenge that stops you from enjoying some simple things life has to offer? Perhaps it's time to look at things differently. No matter what your disability is, there are often other ways to do things you want to do.

Want to participate in a road race, a marathon, or a hike in the river valley, even though you have mobility challenges? Consider using a trailrider. It's like a cart that anyone can use, regardless of age, size, or shape. It only requires a few other people to push and pull it along. Trailriders have allowed many people with disabilities to experience some of the most rigorous terrain, including up mountains. This great group experience can open the door to the great outdoors.

Enjoy hunting or fishing? There are many devices available to help you participate, and it doesn't matter what degree of assistance you need. There are stands that mount directly to a wheelchair to hold a crossbow, rifle, or a fishing rod. The stands can provide minimal assistance or be completely automatic to help you aim, shoot, or cast and reel.

Want to stay indoors? There are assistive devices to help you hold a hand of playing cards, roll dice, and even help you knit or macramé. Maybe you want to play video games? Today's technology lets anyone play. The Nintendo Wii is a great example; the controllers work by movement rather than by pushing buttons. Even I can play some games, and I'm a C5/6 quadriplegic with no hand function.

No matter your disability, there are always options. Don't let anything stand in the way of you enjoying life because no matter which cards you were dealt, there's a royal flush in every deck! ■



The Trailrider

Credit: BCMOS Vancouver

Success at the Special Olympics

This February, more than 500 athletes from all over the province strove for excellence at the 2011 Special Olympics Alberta Winter Games.

At the games, people with intellectual disabilities participate in seven sports: floor hockey, cross-country skiing, alpine skiing, snowshoeing, curling, speed skating, and figure skating. Many athletes have trained for years in preparation. Through their training, participation, and many successes, these athletes learn to believe in themselves.

Special Olympics Alberta Vice President of Sport, Johnny Byrne, stated that the benefits of this experience extend beyond

sports—participating athletes with intellectual disabilities become more engaged in their communities. Byrne noted that the games are just one part of the picture for Special Olympics: there are ongoing programs that reach more than 100 communities in Alberta, and more than 3,000 athletes participate in those programs.

“We were looking for a new way for Lesya to participate in sports,” said Elaine Lupul, whose daughter competes in Special Olympics. “She was participating in little-league baseball, but the competition wasn’t as much fun for her, and some of

the coaches were concerned with her safety.” Through participation in Special Olympics, Lesya has built friendships, acted as a mentor to other athletes, gained confidence in her own abilities, and learned new skills. She says that the team environment is extremely valuable.

“Everyone has to pitch in on the team,” Lesya said. “It’s not just one person doing everything—it’s a group effort. If one person doesn’t understand what the coach is saying, [our teammates] help the athlete understand and we learn from each other.” ■

“...the benefits of this experience extend beyond sports—participating athletes with intellectual disabilities become more engaged in their communities.”

JOHNNY BYRNE, Special Olympics Alberta Vice President of Sport



Blind Behind the Wheel

A grin still lights up my face when I remember participating in the Blind Behind the Wheel race last September at the Edmonton International Raceway.

Going from working with my guide dog, Tofu, to crawling through the driver's window of a stockcar to drive was not something I would have considered a normal Saturday night out. But there I was, with four other blind drivers, decked out in racing gear, getting ready to rock and roll on the racetrack to raise funds for Alberta Guide Dog Services.

I didn't think my ride was "brave," as some friends called it—I thought it was a little crazy, a lot of fun, and a definite adventure. My navigator, Doug Thomson, who

offered encouragement, support, and directions, was the brave one.

With Doug in the passenger seat yelling "go," we took off. It felt like I was really speeding along in my little "black car"—at least I was told it was black. Doug was doing two things at once: directing me and also watching for other cars with their blind drivers.

The five laps went by in a flash and my heart was pounding when Doug yelled, "You won!" What an incredible feeling! The positive energy from everyone involved and the cheering fans made for one very memorable night. ■

"I didn't think my ride was 'brave,' as some friends called it—I thought it was a little crazy, a lot of fun, and a definite adventure."

ANNIE PARKINSON



Annie Parkinson (left), wearing her medal for first place, stopping for a picture with her navigator, Doug Thomson (right).



Sawing Without Seeing

When I lost all my vision and the use of my legs in a car accident almost 17 years ago, I never thought I would be doing what I am doing today. I was very mechanical and handy before my accident, but could I do this in the dark?

The answer is yes! I have a 500 square foot workshop in my backyard with pretty much any carpentry tool you can imagine: a table saw, radial arm saw, lathe, drill press, and lots of sanders. So you probably think that my using power tools now might be dangerous, right? The truth is that I feel much safer now than when I had my sight. It's safe if you pay attention!

And these are high-quality tools. One of my favourites is a talking tape measure: it speaks measurements within a fraction of an inch. Pretty accurate, if you ask me. What do I build? All kinds of things: tables, wishing wells, shelving units, organizational items for my shop to store my tools and lumber, among many others. One of my proudest creations is a toilet planter—a wooden toilet that is

about three quarters of the size of a regular toilet. The bowl is made of 2x2 boards about three and a half inches long. They go around a circle base and are offset from each other on each level. The tank is made of plywood, so a person could put a plant in the bowl and in the tank. There's even a handle for flushing!

I get a kick out of people coming to my shop. I turn off all the lights and then turn on my power tools. For some strange reason, people

get nervous with the lights out, so I educate them on how easy and safe it really can be.

Peer support is also a wonderful tool. I am involved with Woodworking for the Blind, a group formed so blind woodworkers everywhere can ask questions and get tips from one another via e-mail. We also have a website: www.ww4b.org.

Remember: There's more to sawing than seeing. ■

"I get a kick out of people coming to my shop. I turn off all the lights and then turn on my power tools. For some strange reason, people get nervous with the lights out, so I educate them on how easy and safe it really can be." MIKE HAMBLY



Premier's Council Awards

AWARDING OUTSTANDING LEADERS

Recognizing outstanding leadership in making positive, progressive, and sustained change toward full inclusion of people with disabilities in our province.

Nomination forms will be available in summer 2011 at the Council's website seniors.alberta.ca/PremiersCouncil or by calling **1-800-272-8841**.

Every year, the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities (Council) honours Albertans whose outstanding leadership has changed the lives of people with disabilities. The Council Awards are presented at International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) celebrations around the province.

Since December 3, 2002, the Council has observed IDPD. The United Nations declared this worldwide day of recognition in 1992, and it continues to raise awareness and understanding by celebrating people with disabilities and those who support them.

IDPD events will be held on or around December 3, 2011. For information about this important celebration, visit the Council's website (seniors.alberta.ca/PremiersCouncil).

Congratulations to the 2010 Award Recipients!

CAL SCHULER

Award of Excellence in Public Awareness

Cal Schuler, a disability consultant with his own Calgary company, Spectra Alternative Solutions, has raised public awareness and broken down barriers for persons with disabilities through networking with government and educational institutions and community organizations. He demonstrates his

commitment and leadership through giving community presentations on diversity and sensitivity awareness, accessibility, education and employment for persons with disabilities.

VIABLE CALGARY

Award of Excellence in Employment

Viable Calgary has developed an initiative that includes an advertising campaign and a highly accessible website that provide information, services, and resources for employers, and connects them to persons with disabilities who are looking for employment. Viable Calgary's strengthening of relationships with the business community has resulted in meaningful employment for many more persons with disabilities.

KEYANO COLLEGE LEARNER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (LAP)

Award of Excellence in Education

LAP provides support and services to students with disabilities. The goal of LAP is to help individuals develop their learning skills and increase their independence. The positive difference LAP has made is proven by enthusiastic and encouraging feedback from all stakeholders involved, and by the movement of graduates to advanced education and employment.

UKRAINIAN CULTURAL HERITAGE VILLAGE MOBILITY IMPAIRED ONSITE DRIVING TOURS

Award of Excellence in Community

The Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village provides an accessible onsite driving tour that brings 80 acres of cultural landscape and an outdoor living history museum to persons with disabilities. The museum has found a way to ensure that all visitors are included and able to access and experience everything that the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village has to offer.

DR. ROBERT STEADWARD

Gary McPherson Leadership Award

Dr. Steadward has dedicated more than 37 years to pioneering and advancing sports for persons with disabilities and inclusion for all. Dr. Steadward was instrumental in creating the International Paralympics Committee (IPC), which has contributed to empowering persons with disabilities around the world. In 1978, he founded the Canadian Research and Training Centre for Athletes with a Disability. Most recently, Dr. Steadward received the highest honour the Province of Alberta can bestow upon a citizen—induction into the Alberta Order of Excellence. His outstanding career, vision, and extensive volunteer work reflect his passion for raising awareness of disability issues. ■

International Day of Persons with Disabilities

HIGHLIGHTS 2010

Nothing about us without us... Increasing awareness, understanding, and support.

FORT MCMURRAY

Fort McMurray celebrated International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) by hosting two simultaneous events. The first, a disability awareness obstacle course, was set up at an elementary school to demonstrate to students some of the unique challenges that persons with disabilities experience. The second event was held at the Elements Dining Room in the Keyano College Cafeteria, where Diane Ridley, Council Member, presented the Premier's Council Award of Excellence in Education to the Keyano College Learner Assistance Program.



▲ **FORT MCMURRAY** FRONT ROW: *The Learner's Assistance Program team: Julie Hill, Joan McNeil, Sandra Bessey, Tanya Elliott, Donna Esak, Jim Foote, President, Keyano College, Wendy Giles*

FRONT ROW: *Debbie Gendron, Diane Ridley, Council Member of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities, Debbie O'Halloran, Sandi DeCourville and Pam Power.*

PHOTO CREDIT: Sean McLennan

EDMONTON

The Edmonton event took place at Clareview Recreation Centre, where The Paralympic Sports Association and Canadian Forces Base Edmonton participated in a sledge-hockey game. Artwork from the Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts and numerous other organizations from the "Getting to Know Your Community Fair" were set up in the foyer for attendees to enjoy.

Kuen Tang was Master of Ceremonies for the program, which included a screening of *Catching My Breath* (closed-captioned) and *Sledhead*. Tim Hortons sponsored coffee in the morning and the IDPD

organizing committee provided lunch at the end of the day. Melissa Barnes of Choral Morphosis sang *Oh Canada*, and students with the Braille Tone Music Society of Canada performed several musical numbers.

Guest speakers included Viviane Forest (triple gold medal Paralympian, 2000, 2004, 2010) and Lieutenant Colonel Tom Bradley. Mayor Stephen Mandel officially introduced IDPD by presenting the local IDPD organizing committee's co-chairs Karen Quinn and Andrea Laurie with the city's framed proclamation.

Two Premier's Council Awards were presented by Verlyn Olson, MLA

Continued on page 14.



▲ **EDMONTON** LEFT TO RIGHT: *Iris Olinek, Ivan Zubritsky, accepted the Council Award of Excellence in Community, on behalf of the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village, Verlyn Olson, MLA, Council Deputy Chair and Arnold Grandt.*

and former Deputy Chair of the Council, and Bryce Clarke, Council member. The Award of Excellence in Community went to the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village for their Mobility Impaired Onsite Driving Tours and Dr. Robert Steadward received the Gary McPherson Leadership Award.



▲ **EDMONTON** LEFT TO RIGHT: Dr. Robert Steadward, recipient of the Gary McPherson Leadership Award, Val McPherson, Verlyn Olson, MLA and Council Deputy Chair, and Bryce Clarke Council member.

GRANDE PRAIRIE

Grande Prairie hosted a dinner on November 28, 2010, to recognize persons with disabilities who have volunteered in their community. Organizations were invited to nominate persons with disabilities whose contributions to the community increased quality of life for people with physical disabilities in the City of Grande Prairie. Large-screen presentations and certificates of appreciation complemented the event, which was attended by Mayor Bill Given and his wife Susan, as well as Councillor Radbourne and his wife, Donna. Dan Bojarski, Council Member, also attended and spoke on behalf of the Council.

RED DEER

Red Deer celebrated their IDPD with an event at Parkland Mall. The event included an interactive art activity, live music, and an information fair.

Speakers included the Honourable Mary Anne Jablonski, Minister of Seniors and Community Supports, and Cal Dallas, MLA, Red Deer. Marlin Styner, Council's Chair, read a message from the Council. Dignitaries spoke or read letters and Mayor Morris Flewwelling signed the proclamation.



▲ **RED DEER** LEFT TO RIGHT: Lindsey Day, William Stephenson, Dale Strudwick and Twyla Joy Lapointe



▲ **RED DEER** Local artists entertain at the IDPD event in Red Deer with the theme "The art of our abilities" LEFT TO RIGHT: Scott Barnabe, Don Swift, Anthony Kubasek

CALGARY

Calgary festivities took place at the Metropolitan Centre, which included a trade fair for organizations, companies, and service providers; demonstrations; and displays of educational resources of interest to the disability community.

Jack Smart, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Accessibility with the City of Calgary and Nicole Bourgeois of the Champions Career Centre were Masters of Ceremony for the event. Celebrations included an awards ceremony, entertainment, local paralympians, and guest speakers.

Mike Hamblly, Council Member, presented the Premier's Council Award of Excellence in Public Awareness to Cal Schuler and the Award of Excellence in Employment to Viable Calgary.

The city of Calgary presented additional awards to Mike Hamblly (Client Solutions Coordinator with the Canadian Paraplegic Association – Alberta) who received the City of Calgary Advocacy Award and Mark Iantkow who was given the City of Calgary Access Recognition Award.

MEDICINE HAT

Medicine Hat celebrated over several days. The main event was held on December 3, 2010, at Medicine Hat's Historic Monarch Theatre.

The B Movie and The Music Within, two movies that focus on the diversity of disabilities, were shown on November 30 and December 3. Medicine Hat also worked with the Community Collaboration Council (CCC) to promote diversity in the community.

Richard Pimentel (The Music Within) was well received as keynote speaker of two separate engagements held at the Medicine Hat College Theatre and the City of Medicine Hat Chamber.

To further celebrate IDPD, the Medicine Hat Committee visited Elm Street School on November 17 to share information about disabilities. This school was chosen because it is a school with diverse cultures, social issues, and disabilities. They were also invited to hear Richard Pimentel speak. Pam Wagner, Council Member, also spoke at the event.

LETHBRIDGE

In Lethbridge, 17 organizations that help persons with disabilities set up a trade fair at City Hall. The displays demonstrated what it might be like for a person with a disability living in Lethbridge with only the current resources available.

A special flag-raising ceremony in front of City Hall the morning of December 3 recognized community

members who live with a disability. Speakers included Bridget Pastoor, MLA, Lethbridge East; Ryan Parker, Deputy Mayor; Austin Mardon, Council Member; and Ross Norton, Paralympian gold medalist. The four speakers stood by the flagpole while a local teenager with disabilities raised the flag. Following the ceremony, the public were invited to mix and mingle. ■

Feature Article

Submitted by PAMELA WAGNER, Council Member

Recreation in The Hat



We are fortunate in Medicine Hat, a small city of only 60,000 in the southeast corner of Alberta, to have a wide range of recreational and leisure activities that are accessible to all of our citizens.

About 30 years ago, a group of artistically minded citizens decided that Medicine Hat should have a Cultural Centre. This beautiful building, located on the campus of Medicine Hat College, is jointly

operated by the city and the college. It houses learning, working, meeting, and performance spaces for both accomplished and aspiring artists. Countless artistic disciplines merge here: from potters, painters, photographers, fibre artists, and other craftspeople to singers, actors, musicians, and performing artists.

For persons with disabilities, the Medicine Hat Cultural Centre is a fully accessible space where one can learn and practise the arts with other community members who share their passion, all for a very modest class fee. In this unique setting, masters and novices work together and share soul-enriching

experiences in the creative arts. Whether taking a music lesson, participating in a workshop with a visiting expert, or enjoying lunch on the patio, artists and patrons come together in the Cultural Centre to share their gifts and abilities with each other and with the greater community.

The value of the shared experience that takes place between the audience and the artist is immeasurable. It is an absolute joy to see people of all ages and abilities coming together to participate in the life-enriching experience of enjoying the arts and gaining valued roles as members of the cultural community. ■

Success, One Strike at a Time

Early one September morning, my daughter Janice and I drove down Glen Park Road to Leduc. It was the beginning of a journey that would last 18 years and take us across Alberta from Grande Prairie to Lethbridge. We were on our way to her very first morning of bowling.

Bowling is a sport that has inclusion down pat. Adaptive equipment has long been available and the structure of the sport facilitates involvement by all ages and abilities.

The Youth Bowling Club focuses on success by structuring a process that rewards personal development and progress; this allows everyone to shine in an environment where you are just “one of the team.” The coaches work with the youth to develop their game while teaching patience, perseverance, and team building skills. Acceptance is part of the game.

“When I look back, bowling was a large part of my childhood. I wasn’t good at many sports growing up, but I found that bowling wasn’t a

sport where players picked their team members. It was an activity that everyone could play.” (Janice Ridley)

Janice bowled for in the Youth Club for 12 years, working her way up through different levels. She then participated as a senior bowler throughout central Alberta in the travel league for another six years. She represented Leduc twice in the Alberta Winter Games. She loved her sport and was nicknamed Smurf very early on. The nickname stuck and that small blonde would go out on the lane and throw a nice, calculated ball—not hard, but accurate and consistent—making her the foundation of the team. Janice spent those years laughing and having



fun, but she also built relationships, changed attitudes, and touched hearts along the way. Janice continues to have a full life and fond memories of her years in bowling. ■

“I wasn’t good at many sports growing up, but I found bowling wasn’t a sport where players picked their team members. It was an activity that everyone could play.” JANICE RIDLEY

