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Empowering people with developmental disabilities

Joe's Table Receives CLBC's Widening our World Award

Contributed by Aamir Sheriff

Some of Vancouver's local cafés are known for their high quality beverages, inviting atmosphere, or for being environmentally conscious. Joe's Table Café has all this and more because it is unique in its mission. While serving high quality beverages, maintaining environmental standards, and having a great atmosphere, there is something special about this café, which is located in the Metrotown area in Burnaby. When you first walk into Joe's Table, you are welcomed by smiling faces and excellent service. After a couple of visits, you'll realize that five out of the nine Joe's Table employees have developmental disabilities.

The café opened last year and aims to provide job opportunities for persons with developmental

disabilities. It is owned by Peter and Stephanie Chung. The couple named it after their late son, Joseph, who lived with autism and had epilepsy. After his swimming accident in 2012, Peter and Stephanie remained determined to get the Joe's Table project off the ground so they could fulfill their mission of providing job opportunities to persons with developmental disabilities. Joe's Table is located in a building that houses other businesses operated by Peter.

Peter, Stephanie and the rest of their team are making a positive difference in building inclusive workplaces and communities through Joe's Table Society, the non-profit that operates the business. For this reason, they were recently recognized with the Widening Our World (WOW) award from

Community Living B.C. However, their work does not end now. The group has plans to expand and open coffee shops across North America starting with a second location in Downtown Vancouver.

Frances and Taylor, who found their jobs at Joe's Table through **posAbilities**, love what they do because the job is tailored to

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Photograph courtesy of Chris Rae, Community Living British Columbia.

Do you have a story for our quarterly newsletter or website?

Staff writer/editor: Aamir Sheriff

Email: communications@posAbilities.ca or call (604) 299-4001 ext. 235.

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www.posAbilities.ca



Joe's Table Receives CLBC's Widening our World Award

Continued from Cover Page

their strengths. Some of their duties include preparing food and beverages, keeping the place clean and inviting and interacting with customers. For some, Joe's Table will be a place of long-term employment. For others, Joe's Table is an excellent stepping stone where they can get work experience before moving onto another job opportunity.

So next time you are in the Metrotown area, check out Joe's Table Café. While you are there, don't miss the art gallery in the back room that features a piece honouring Joseph and the work of numerous local artists. Soon, the gallery will also include artwork from our *Alternative Creations Studio*. You never know, Joe's Table Café might become your new favourite meeting location or place to hang out with friends!



Insights from the BC Disability White Paper Dialogues

Contributed by Aamir Sheriff

"Government policy that outlines universal and accessible design requirements for buildings, homes, street, stores and the general infrastructure of cities would help reduce costs in the long run."

"We need ONE website across different disabilities where people can collaborate, and have access to information categorized by employment, education, and other relevant topics."

"The focus needs to be on educating employers and for those employers who are already experiencing the benefits, the opportunity for their HR departments to share HOW that truth worked and HOW the entire company benefited."

These are just some of the insights brought forward by citizens at the B.C. Disability White Paper in-person and online community consultations. 'How do YOU think B.C. is doing when it comes to inclusivity and accessibility?' is the question the B.C. government is asking at these discussions, which are being held in different communities across the province.

When I first entered the in-person consultation, we were given an overview of the White Paper process. I joined a table with two facilitators and three other community members. We then spent 10 minutes each discussing six topics:

- Innovation
- Personal supports, aids and devices
- Work and contribution
- Housing and accessibility in the broader environment
- Social networks
- Asset accumulation through the Registered Disability Savings Plan

The small group breakout sessions allowed everyone's voices to be heard, and the ideas were then put together and presented by the table facilitators. It was also a great opportunity to meet so many other citizens who are eager and excited to share their opinions on how B.C. can become more inclusive and accessible. In total, there were about 80 people in the room.

Participants were also encouraged to contribute more of their ideas on the "solution wall" and "removing red tape wall" to ultimately feed into the policy development process. For me, it was eye-opening to hear the broad range of considerations that need to be made when working towards a more inclusive and accessible province.

The public consultations are being guided by a leadership team made up of government, the disabilities community, led by the Minister's Council on Employment and Accessibility, and the business community, led by the President's Group. Following the consultations, the ideas and solutions presented by members of the community will be used to form the B.C. Disability White Paper.

There are still several ways to provide feedback, including an online forum, hosting your own session, or tweeting using the hashtag #DisabilityBC. Check out this website for more information:

www.engage.gov.bc.ca/disabilitywhitepaper. **Consultations close at 4pm on March 11th.**

Don't miss this chance to have your voice heard!



A Tribute to Don Cassell

It is with great sadness we announce the passing of Don Cassell. We say farewell to a kind, dedicated, funny and compassionate person. In Don's role as a casual staff member, he was able to make a difference in the lives of many. He will always be remembered and greatly missed. Our heartfelt condolences go out to his loved ones.



Advocating for Improved Transit

Contributed by Deepi Leihl

My sister and I have been taking the HandyDART since our early childhood. Using HandyDART has always been a challenge. In my opinion, it is getting much worse than it has ever been. The population has grown, and the government has not supplied the sufficient growth in funding needed to support the growing demand for the HandyDART system in the Lower Mainland. I found that we needed more HandyDART buses in the service areas, and that there were also an insufficient number of buses and drivers on shift to match the number of calls

coming in. My parents saw a news broadcast on TV that reported HandyDART was going to be cutting back. It was stated that the number of both buses and drivers were going to be reduced. This situation prompted me to go out of my comfort zone and see if I could get the government to pay attention to the situation and possibly create a change.

I talked to Cathy Ballard, a TransLink representative, who has been a great resource from the beginning. When I asked her about the changes in the HandyDART service, she stated that there isn't a "cut-back". Rather, there is a lack of growth and replacement of the number of buses due to limited funding to replace old buses taken out of service. With this shortage, they have addressed the issue by implementing a Taxi Pilot Project. Taxis are used to pick up passengers when there is a shortage of HandyDART buses. I am sure the Taxi Pilot Project does somewhat help meet the need left behind by the shortage of HandyDARTs, but there is a lot more work to be done to get transit accessibility to where it needs to be.

People I work with at News 101 CiTR Radio Station gave me the idea of putting together a petition. I did some research on what the best way would be, and decided upon doing an online petition. Setting this up proved to be a relatively simple process, and it was easy for people to sign it. The signatures I wanted to get came very slowly, but I continued spreading the word. I talked to my family, friends, peers and fellow HandyDART users. They in turn got in touch with their friends and even spread the word on Facebook. My goal was to get 1,000 signatures, but it was taking a long time so I decided to settle with 500. After almost a year, I achieved my goal!

The next step was deciding who to send it to. Most importantly, TransLink needed a copy of the petition. I had been in touch with Peter Hill, Manager of Access Transit, on previous occasions and sent a copy to him to share within TransLink. I also sent copies to Richmond MLAs Linda Reid, Alice Wong and John Yap. To date, I have only heard back from Peter Hill at TransLink, who assured me that my concerns are being addressed. But in my opinion, the B.C. Government needs to make accessibility a top priority. I am still hopeful that the MLAs will carry the petition forward and help raise awareness for us.

Although I submitted the petition at 500 signatures, it is still active. If anyone is interested in supporting this cause, please sign it! Here is the link: www.thepetitionsite.com/375/703/024/handydart/#

My advice to anyone that has concerns or complaints would be to contact HandyDART and speak up. Advocate for yourself and all individuals who are affected by the lack of accessible transportation. Don't hesitate to contact the government agencies or start your own petitions when you see the need. If you want change - create change!



Raminder Kaur, Behaviour Consultant and **Monique Nelson**, Director of Community Engagement, enjoyed sharing information about **posAbilities'** Laurel Behaviour Support Services with the South Asian community through JoyTV's "Harpreet Singh Show". The duo filmed two segments and looks forward to continuing to dialogue with the community through the support of **Mr. Singh** and his show.

COMING EVENTS





PROGRAM NEWS BEAT

Can You Dig It Sews Seeds of Inclusion, Where Are We Growing Next?

Contributed by
Cinthia Pagé, Project Coordinator

The *Can You Dig It* (CYDI) initiative entered its fifth year this past January and has grown in scale dramatically since its inception. A Strategic Visioning Day was recently held with leaders of the initiative and a dozen of its partner organizations. Although infused with fresh ideas, our focus remains on intentionally creating welcoming, hospitable community gardens where people with disabilities experience true social and economic inclusion. We have introduced several new projects this year and broadened our horizons thanks to our partnerships.

- We are particularly excited about involving community connectors in our gardens. The connectors are affiliated with **Building Caring Communities (BC²)** and will be deployed to work with a specific group of gardeners in order to foster relationships between persons with disabilities and community members.
- With the generous support of the **Disability Without Poverty (DWP)** network, we will continue to develop community based demonstration projects that will result in improved social inclusion outcomes for people with disabilities. Amongst those projects is the creation of a Community Garden Coalition where all CYDI gardens and others will be invited to connect and share best practices in creating inclusive and welcoming community gardens.
- Along with **Finding Home** (www.findinghome.ca), we will be hosting of a series of "Garden Dialogues." Participants will be invited to define home and belonging, identify core issues and set up actions to foster inclusion and belonging in their community gardens and neighbourhoods. We anticipate that this process will lead to gardeners taking a more active role in reaching out to, supporting and working with individuals who have developmental disabilities.

We would also like to update our readers on the cool things that are happening due to our partnership with *Quest Food Exchange*. We have just established 13 fresh food collection depots that will be operating from June to August in Burnaby and Vancouver. Individuals with disabilities from five separate programs have been recruited to participate in the food collection, which will then be distributed through Quest's non-profit food markets.

Other partnership news includes working with *Urban Systems Foundation*, the *City of Surrey* and the *City of Burnaby*. Our role in Surrey is unique, in that we are proud to have been selected to be the official partner in creating welcoming community gardens. We have already started working on partnerships and connections, including Semiahmoo House Society, local schools, churches, food security and other community initiatives. In Burnaby, we look forward to cultivating food and relationships in local parks.

In sum, we have many new projects and gardens in development thanks to all of our generous supporters. It is my pleasure to continue to work on these projects and to see the connections amongst children, seniors, individuals with disabilities, economically marginalized neighbours and community members blossom!

Fun Camp Offers Youth Head Start to Employment

Contributed by
posAbilities Employment Service

Head Start Employment Camp is an innovative, fun and engaging camp for youth between the ages of 14-18 who would like to learn about the employment opportunities that await them after high school. The camps are currently held at the Vancouver location of our **posAbilities Employment Service** and are open to youth from any community.

Each camp is designed to explore employment through a series of fun and engaging activities centered on safety, workplace expectations, compensation and more. Camps run from Monday to Friday for four hours each day. Campers can elect to sign up for one or both weeks of the session since the activities rotate. We have found that a second week deepens the learning experience for those who wish to participate.

Although Spring camps are now full, we are taking registrations for our upcoming summer sessions. Join us July 14-18 and 21-25; or August 18-22 and 25-29 and get a head start on employment!

For more information about our services, please contact an Employment Specialist at (604) 291-1902 or email employment@posAbilities.ca.



Photograph courtesy of Aaron Johannes, www.imagineacircle.com.



At the Movies

Reviews
contributed by
Dave Schmidt

I saw *Labor Day* on Sunday February the 2nd, and

it is ironic how that fell on Groundhog Day. Anyway, in the movie, Kate Winslet is fantastic as a depressed single mother raising her son. Then there is Josh Brolin, a convict who escapes prison and needs a place to lay low. He bumps into Kate's son, who convinces his mom to give the stranger a place to stay. In short, this story is really about finding love, loss and then finding love all over again. I give this movie a "two thumbs up!"

This review is about your average war movie, called *The Monuments Men*. It is based on a true story about a group of soldiers who recovered artwork from the Nazis. Cate Blanchett portrays a Parisian woman. Her dialogue is fantastic and so is Matt Damon's dialogue. I highly recommend this movie and give it a "three thumbs up!"

Goodbye till next time...
see you at the movies!

**Dave Schmidt works at a movie theatre
and sees multiple movies per month!**

OXFORD SUPERHEROES



Oxford Superheroes receive Sponsorship Recognition Award from, Val Derhak, 2013 Sponsor Coordinator with the PCMSA (Port Coquitlam Minor Softball Association)



Christmas holiday celebration with the Canadian Pacific Railway, where the Oxford Superheroes donated cans for the local food bank and enjoyed live music.



FAMILIES MATTER



Support Through Education and Connection

Contributed by Monique Nelson

This winter, **posAbilities** co-hosted a series of three educational workshops on financial planning with the *Burnaby Association for Community Inclusion* and the Vancouver Parents of Youth in Transition support group. Our sessions were filled to capacity with families who gathered to learn about how to open and make the most of a Registered Disability Savings Plan, what the key ingredients of Wills, Estates and Trusts are (as well as important new legislative changes) and how to manage tax time. If you would like a copy of these presentations, please contact info@posAbilities.ca or call us at (604) 299-4001.

Continuing along the theme of assisting families to prepare for the financial and personal security of their loved ones, we are currently planning a series of Spring/Summer workshops in Richmond, Maple Ridge and Burnaby. Topics being considered include housing options such as Shared Living and co-housing, supported employment, and a film screening of the award winning Canadian movie *Gabrielle*, which will be followed by a facilitated dialogue on healthy relationships. Contact us to be added to our email list so that you don't miss these exciting opportunities to learn and grow with other families!

Our Senior Parents Support Network continues to meet and connect monthly at **posAbilities'** head office. The group has recently discussed life-long learning and transit issues with invited guests who have expertise in these areas.

We also host training workshops for families of young children and youth through Laurel's delivery of the Triple P® Positive Parenting Program, and are developing a Behaviour Support Workshop for families based on the Mandt System® to be launched this Fall.

In closing, we post media reports, sector news and a wide variety of events on our home page. We hope you will visit us online at www.posAbilities.ca often, and continue to connect with us by the means most convenient to you! Your advice and feedback are most welcome.

Laughter, Joy and Unexpected Friendship

Contributed by Brittany Huizenga

Bryan and James have been friends since last fall when they were first introduced to each other over a cup of steeped tea at Tim Hortons. They made an instant impression on each other, bouncing around names, songs, movie titles, comic book series and old records. It was a verbal game of backgammon, challenging each other to see if they would get along. They could have kept at it for hours!

The extent to which their knowledge and interests overlap is incredible, and together these two make a knowledge-force to be reckoned with. Never agree to play trivial pursuit with these two – you are sure to lose!

Bryan and James both have a quirky and intelligent sense of humour, and love each other's jokes. They share a passion for building collections, and each have incredible book and record collections. It is an art, a gift and a lifetime pursuit.

Laughter and joy are the first things you notice when spending time with Bryan and James. Whether it's going for breakfast, watching a matinee, bowling, or playing board games, these two are having fun together. The combination of these two personalities is electric and wonderfully eccentric, and it has led to an exciting friendship.



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Foodies Unite at the Britannia Community Potluck

Contributed by
Brooke Oxley

There is a Spanish saying "*Barriga llena, corazón contento*" which means "*Full belly, happy heart.*" This idea inspired around 20 people to gather at the Britannia Community Centre one Sunday evening in late January to do what people do best – share a meal and talk. Folks of all ages were there, from four to 80 years old! Meeting new people, eating healthy food, sharing stories, ideas and listening to music was a beautiful way to spend a winter's eve.

Ian Marcuse of the Grandview Woodland Food Connection introduced us to a fantastic and interactive iBook presentation about food security networks in Vancouver. The presentation generated many ideas and much hope for a future local food economy that is accessible to all.

A big thank you goes out to Ian and Laura Kosciecha, one of our Community Connectors, for their work in bringing people together and fostering community through this free event. Next up, is Britannia's annual Stone Soup Festival, which will be held on Saturday, May 10th this year. We hope you can make it!



Quest and *posAbilities* are Cookin'!

Contributed by Hemant Kulkarni,
written by Aamir Sheriff

When we found out Quest Food Exchange was looking to purchase commercial kitchen equipment to install at its new Dundas location, we jumped at the opportunity to create a partnership. Their search was at the time when **posAbilities'** PACT program was moving to a new site on Venables Street, which did not have space for a commercial kitchen. The equipment was slated to go into storage. A win-win situation emerged and we donated our kitchen equipment to Quest, BC's largest not-for-profit food exchange program. Quest offers access to affordable and healthy food choices for those facing barriers to this basic necessity.

This year, Quest is putting on special monthly community kitchen sessions with half of the spots reserved for *posAbilities'* program participants. The rest of the spots are filled by other Quest members, creating a great opportunity for people to connect and learn how to cook healthy meals together. Professional chefs are invited to lead the two hour sessions. Through a grant obtained by Quest, subsidies are available to *posAbilities'* participants. Each session costs \$10/person and now Quest is covering the cost of every other session for our persons served.

The group begins each session with a tour of the grocery market. This is the time when our budding cooks do a walk-through and learn how to purchase healthy foods that are in season on a reasonable budget. After shopping for the ingredients, the group heads back to the kitchen. A chef then guides them as they work together to cook healthy, nutritious meals. Then comes the best part: eating the delicious food, mingling and building friendships (not to mention taking home the leftovers!).

To date, persons served through **Alternative Creations Studio, Aegis** and **New Transitions** have participated in this program. For more information, contact us before the next monthly session, which is on **Wednesday, March 5, 2014**. All cooking classes are based at the 2020 Dundas Street location in East Vancouver.

Events like these are great for creating an inclusive community. There are relationships to be built, skills to be learned, lots of fun to be had and delicious food to be eaten of course. Sounds like a fun way to spend the day!



A Social Experiment

Contributed by Katherine Allen

If you're on Facebook, you're probably no stranger to the 'Take a Seat – Make a Friend?' YouTube video that went viral. The makers of the video conducted a social experiment which consisted of a colored ball pit, a sign which read 'Take a Seat – Make a Friend?' and perfect strangers. What they caught on camera is truly inspiring. One watches as perfect strangers take a seat in the ball pit, read a random question aloud, and share a few minutes of real connection – complete with laughs, confessions, and heart-felt moments.

The *Building Caring Communities (BC²) Team* was so inspired by this video that we set out to create a similar social experiment on the streets of Vancouver. So on a very brisk December morning, we set up at Grandview Park on Commercial Drive and got ready for what would turn out to be a very memorable Friday. We came equipped with hot apple cider, a tent, two chairs, a sign and – here's the best part – inflated balloons with secret questions and a sprinkling of glitter inside. The idea was to invite two strangers to sit under the tent, choose a balloon, pop the balloon, read the question aloud and share a moment of connection. And that's exactly what happened!

Highlights of the afternoon included an elderly gentleman and a traveler from Montreal discussing which animal they would choose to be. The former chose to be a fire monkey, while the latter chose to be a phoenix – both were intrigued by the element of fire. Other highlights included two perfect strangers discussing details of what their dream date would look like (no, they did not exchange numbers). And finally, there were two strangers that realized that although they shared the same name, they had very different answers when asked 'what is your dream job?'

The success of this initial pop-up event has inspired the *BC² Team* to make this a monthly event. Though the locations and details might change, the premise will remain the same - how can we bring people together to share spontaneous moments of connection? If you see us in your community, we invite you to join us and make new friends!

Join the Buddy Club

Contributed by Sherri Crane

The idea for the *Buddy Club* came from a discussion in our Supported Living Network staff meeting. We wanted to find a way in which our residents, staff, members of other *posAbilities* programs and anybody at all could form friendships and have fun together! Then we settled on the idea to set up monthly events where persons in our programs were welcome to attend and were encouraged to "bring a buddy."

We have already put together a couple of "Buddy Club" evenings, the most memorable being a trip to Grouse Mountain for dinner at *Altitudes* and some winter fun up on the mountain. We saw people come out all the way from Richmond for that event!

Recently we held a pub night where we watched our Canadian Olympians go for gold. In the next few months

we have plans for a dance, potluck and another pub night.

The *Buddy Club* is open to anyone who would like to join. We hope to see new people attend and make new connections, and continue those friendships outside of our *posAbilities* programs. Stay tuned to the *posAbilities* website and Facebook page for upcoming events.



What's New at The Hub?



We Are Many (WAM) Community Conversations

WAM is a conversation for citizens who care for their neighbourhood. It is a place for those who long for a community full of hospitality and connections. This is a conversation of possibility, of relatedness and the belief that each of us has the capacity to create a community that works for all. Light refreshments provided. Come join us!

When: First Thursday of each month from 4:30 - 6pm

Where: The Hub – 251 East 11th Avenue, Vancouver

Who: Anybody can attend

For more information, contact Joe Erpenbeck at 604-365-9113 or BC2@posAbilities.ca.



Sewing Club

This past October, a community Sewing Club started off at the Hub! The club meets every Wednesday morning at the Hub, and is led by the wonderful Amie Peacock. She is an energetic and inspiring woman who seeks to bring the community together so they can get to know each other and spend time working on small sewing projects. This club is free and open to everyone, whether you are an experienced sewist or are picking up a sewing needle for the first time. You do not need to own sewing supplies to participate either! At the classes, Amie teaches how to use the right stitching methods for hand sewing projects, and also brings her own sewing machine for advanced projects. The club is looking to participate in a group sewing project that would allow them to share their gifts with our neighbours and the larger community.

When: 9:30 - 11:30am every Wednesday

Where: 251 East 11th Avenue, Vancouver

Who: Anybody can attend

RSVP by emailing amie2020@gmail.com or just show up!

CONGRATULATIONS

On behalf of our organization, I would like to recognize and thank the following employees for their years of service to **posAbilities**.

Your dedication to persons served, your peers and our stakeholders is much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Fernando Coelho, CEO

5 Years of Service

**Graham Millen
Marcella Smith
Edralyn Ursua**

We Did It!

New Certification Attained from WorkSafeBC

We are pleased to announce that **posAbilities** passed the safety audit with a score of 92% and achieved the WorkSafeBC Certificate of Recognition (COR). This is a significant milestone in our ongoing quest for excellence and further reduction of accidents in the workplace. The resulting 10% discount on our WorkSafeBC premiums can now be spent on serving the persons we work with. Congratulations and a big thank you to all employees!



Relias® E-learning Library Available Soon

All **posAbilities** team members will soon have access to the **Relias® online learning system**, a web-based product specifically designed for the community living sector. It contains an e-learning library with a variety of courses that are interactive and geared to the needs of adult learners.

It will include a customized library for our organization, as well as mandatory and optional courses for the professional and personal development of all staff. Employees can now complete their mandatory course work while on shift; supervisors can assign courses, track progress and provide support to their team members; and optional courses can be taken at no cost on an employee's personal time.

Look forward to a demonstration of the Relias® training system at your upcoming team meetings and a subsequent email with login instructions. If you have any questions following the demonstration, please contact your Team Leader, who will be pleased to assist you.



Congratulations Award Winners!

The **Believe, Empower** and **Inspire** awards recognize **posAbilities** team members for going above and beyond their role to help us achieve our mission.

In January, **Don House**, Senior Support Worker at Stage Door, received the **Empower** award for his contributions to the troupe's success through a recent

project that involved soliciting funding and producing two Public Service Announcements. You can view "Name" and "Driving" on our YouTube channel!

Gino Chittattu, Senior Support Worker at Oxford house, was nominated for the **Inspire** award in recognition of his outstanding contributions to fostering community connections and contributions by the Oxford Superheroes. The trio has recently joined the "Adopt-a-Block" program, sponsored a girls' minor softball team and contributed to the food bank by hosting an event that brought in neighbourhood donations.

Congratulations to both Don and Gino and a note of thanks to their peers for making the nomination to honour them!

Editor's note: The Recognition Committee meets twice a year to review nominations and to honour recipients of the Believe, Inspire and Empower awards. To learn more about the recognition award criteria, please read Procedure: Recognizing Outstanding Contributions by Employees. To make a nomination, complete the Employee Nomination Recognition Form (ShareVision --> Employee Services --> Printable Forms --> HR-General) and email it to awards@posAbilities.ca.



We've Updated Our Website!

Just last month, we changed up the home page of our **posAbilities** website. The NEW home page "slider" is where we are now sharing the latest news stories in our sector (updated every 2-3 days), our latest weekly blog post, a featured event and a featured program. Check it out! If you have any news stories, events or exciting program updates you would like us to feature, please email communications@posAbilities.ca.