

AA Connections

A publication of Alberta Association for Community Living



At Red Arrow Motorcoach, attention to quality passenger service is a value instilled in all employees. One of the company's newest staff members, David Sobieski, says his favourite responsibilities are to welcome and bid farewell to passengers at the downtown Calgary terminal. "It's nice to be friendly," he says. A motivational sign in the Red Arrow staff room reads: Be Proud of the Job You Do! Clearly, that's a message David has taken to heart. His job became a reality through the new Calgary Rotary Employment Partnership. See story pages 4-5.

(Photo by Karin Melberg Schwier)

In this issue:

- People still vulnerable 2
- Rotary employment now in Calgary 4
- St. Paul man keeps eye on the sky 8
- Meet our Dream Makers 12
- Resource Centre opens 15



Alberta Association for
Community Living

Changing Lives
Changing Communities

On the cover

David Sobieski is one of the newest employees at Red Arrow Motorcoach in Calgary. As a job seeker with the new Calgary Rotary Employment Partnership, he thought something in customer service would be a good fit. Part of his new job is representing Red Arrow when people board the bus or arrive at the downtown terminal. David's obviously proud

of his new job, and takes it seriously. He shines his nametag and thinks only for a moment when asked what he plans to do with his paycheque. He grins and says he plans on a holiday to Las Vegas, and taking his mom shopping. Red Arrow is the first employer to climb on board this new Partnership. See story pages 4-5.

Albertans still vulnerable

AACL praised Mary Anne Jablonski, Minister of Seniors and Community Supports, for wanting to improve access to Family Managed Supports as outlined in an administrative review of the Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) program. However, AACL notes that despite this progress many Albertans remain vulnerable.

"While AACL applauds the Minister's commitment to increasing support and flexibility for families with sons and daughters with developmental disabilities, we remain deeply concerned about those individuals who require support but who don't qualify for the PDD program," says Barb MacIntyre, AACL President and the mother of a son with developmental disabilities.

AACL commends the Ministry in wanting to move toward improved outcomes for individuals and in expanding Family Managed Supports, an action families appreciate and will benefit from. AACL is pleased to be a partner with Calgary PDD in establishing the first Family Managed Supports Resource Centre in Alberta (named in memory of Darrell Cook – see page 15), and hopes to see similar initiatives across the province in the wake of the government's move.

With respect to those Review recommendations, which called for increasing the size of service providers, consolidating services and/or tendering services, MacIntyre noted, "These are not supported by AACL and would not be in the best interests of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families."

Additional background can be found on the AACL's website: www.aacl.org. The review of PDD is available on the Ministry of Seniors and Community Supports web site at: www.seniors.alberta.ca. ■

a publication of the

Alberta Association for Community Living

Provincial office

11724 Kingsway Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5G 0X5
Tel: 780.451.3055
Fax: 780.453.5779
Toll free: 1.800.252.7556

Regional office

212-4014 Macleod Trail SE
Calgary, AB T2G 2R7
Tel: 403.717.0361
Fax: 403.228.2132

Executive Committee

President

Barbara MacIntyre, Slave Lake

Past President

Jim Reid, Calgary

Vice Presidents

Karen Bartell, Calgary
Dean Fowler, Lethbridge

Treasurer

Don Anderson, St. Albert

Members at Large

Chelsea Lord, St. Albert
Shyla Masse, Edmonton
Marianne Penner, Three Hills

Chief Executive Officer

Bruce Uditsky

For a complete staff listing, visit
www.aacl.org, click on Contact Us.

Editor

Karin Melberg Schwier
Copestone Writing



Design and Layout

DESIGNED BY
M4 MULTIMEDIA

<http://members.shaw.ca/m4.multimedia/>

Publications Mail

Publications Mail Agreement 40011812
Return undeliverable addresses to:
AACL
11724 Kingsway Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5G 0X5

Fill up with Husky Every time you use your AAAL Husky gas card, the Association receives 2% of the purchase price. A little adds up to a lot. Get your Husky card from AAAL and fill up to support people with developmental disabilities.



Influencing needed change: your role and opportunity

by Bruce Uditsky

Advocacy, to create needed change in government policies and practices to improve the circumstances of children and adults with developmental disabilities and their families, must be an ongoing effort. However, from time to time, an opportunity presents itself that requires a more concerted and organized campaign. That moment in Alberta is now.

This fall Alberta will have a new Premier as the Progressive Conservative party elects a new leader on September 17. There are six candidates; one of them will become the new Premier who will most likely call a general election in 2012. The Alberta Liberal Party is also holding a leadership race. There are five candidates with the leadership vote to take place on September 10.

The leadership races, especially as one will result in a new premier, and the subsequent general election, provide back-to-back opportunities for families and their allies to make their policy and funding needs known. Becoming organized and involved now provides a better foundation for the voice of families to be heard in next year's election. You can do this in two ways:

- (1) By becoming engaged in the leadership races, participating in leadership forums, talking to or writing the leadership candidates and ensuring your voice is heard and,
- (2) By joining the party or parties of your choice and voting for the leadership candidate you think best represents the interests of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

You can learn more about the leadership candidates, their positions and the dates of public forums by going to the websites of each party: www.albertapc.ab.ca and www.albertaliberal.com. On each candidate's page, you can see their positions on issues that matter to families. AACL suggests you focus on the following issues:

(1) Inclusive education:

(a) A parent's right to choose to have their child with disabilities receive a quality education in a regular

classroom: Access to an inclusive education, as supported by decades of research, can provide a child with disabilities with lasting benefits. Alberta parents do not have the right to choose an inclusive education. Having this right, the same right as any other parent and the same right a parent of a child with disabilities enjoys with respect to their other children, will do much to advance inclusive education.



There is an opportunity for this right to be established as Alberta Education has embarked on a plan to create an inclusive education system with many promising possibilities. A new Education Act is proposed. Neither of these actions, however, secures a parent's right to choose. The proposed Education Act does more to ensure the rights of school districts than the rights of parents of children with disabilities.

Let the leadership candidates know why an inclusive education is so vitally important to your child and how it benefits all children. More information on the benefits of inclusive education, including supportive and extensive research, is available from AACL. Tell them you want the same right to choose your child's educational placement as you have with respect to your children without disabilities as do other parents.

Ask directly: *Do you support my right to choose my child's education; to have my child in a regular classroom?*

(b) *Inclusive post-secondary education:* While Alberta is a world leader in fully inclusive post-secondary educational opportunities, there is only enough funding to support 85 adults with developmental disabilities. Hundreds more individuals and their families would love to have the opportunity. Quality inclusive post-secondary education has proven to be very effective in dramatically increasing the likelihood of employment, fostering relationships and enhancing abilities.

Ask directly: *Will you support the expansion of inclusive post-secondary education for students with*

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 →

Now in Calgary: "And what do you do?"

Employment partnership gives people a good answer

by Karin Melberg Schwier

It's the universal question whenever people get together. It often comes up before the weather, kids, certainly before politics or religion: "What do you do?" Our jobs, our careers, our vocations are largely what define us as citizens, as contributors to our communities. People with developmental disabilities often represent the most underemployed of the unemployed, frequently experiencing unemployment rates in excess of 70 per cent. But because of an exciting partnership between AACL and 30 Rotary Clubs from the two Alberta Rotary Districts (5360 and 5370), when someone asks the question, over 165 people with developmental disabilities—including two just hired in Calgary—can answer it with confidence and pride.

These Employment Partnerships create valued employment for adults with developmental disabilities and are underway in Edmonton, Lloydminster, Red Deer, Grande Prairie and now the newest in Calgary. Through these partnerships Rotarians find and create employment with mentorship provided by AACL. Ongoing community support, where needed, is provided by community agencies. Many Rotarians are making an invaluable difference by helping people with developmental disabilities "get their foot in the door" of business and industry and to have a chance for real jobs. In turn those Rotarians are learning about the contribution people with developmental disabilities can make from improving the bottom line, by reducing turnover and by increasing customer satisfaction.

When former Edmonton Mayfield Rotary Club President Wendy McDonald, now AACL Development Director, heard then Rotary International President Frank Devlyn call on Rotarians around the world to find employment within their businesses for people with disabilities, she was inspired. She turned to AACL and with the creative ideas of Bruce Uditsky, AACL CEO—now a Rotarian—and the support of then Provincial Director of Persons with Developmental Disabilities, Norm

McLeod, the concept of a partnership with Rotarians to create employment was born.

"As a Rotarian it makes me proud that we are making a difference, not only in the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities, but also through the positive impact on businesses and workplaces," says Wendy. "As a mom, it gives me hope that the employment struggle for my son as he approaches adulthood won't be as difficult as it has been for others."

The newest partnership has come together in Calgary, spearheaded by Mark Starratt, Past Rotary District Governor 5360, who recognized this employment initiative was "a good fit" for Rotary because of its vast network and focus on the vocations of its members.



David Sobieski stands ready to welcome disembarking passengers.

"As a business leader and Rotarian, I can look within my own business to see what employment opportunities there might be for someone with a developmental disability," says Mark, who is Director, Wealth Management and Portfolio Manager with the Starratt Team at Richardson GMP, Calgary. "But it's also who I know that I might educate and help them understand the value of hiring someone in their business."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13 ➔

Red Arrow steps up as first Rotary partnership employer

AACL and many of the Rotary Clubs in Calgary, with the support of Calgary Region Community Board Persons with Developmental Disabilities, recently established a partnership to create employment opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities.

“These partnerships with Rotary Clubs and Districts have proven successful in other Alberta communities and AACL is truly thrilled,” says Bruce Uditsky, AACL CEO, “to see this partnership realized in Calgary.”



Co-workers Lisa Black, Sophie Bergen and Chelsa Gamester. “It’s a great job and the people are nice!” Sophie says. “I keep things neat and tidy so it looks good for customers. I greet them when they arrive.”
(Photo by Courtney Adams)

David Sobieski studies the photos on his list of responsibilities. He’s arrived for work after taking a bus and the CTrain to the downtown Red Arrow Calgary Ticket Office. It’s a rainy morning, but his smile beams like sunshine as he greets his new co-workers. Adjusting his nametag, he tells his supervisor Jodi King, Manager, Passenger Experience, it’s time to tidy up the front waiting area. “Okay, David,” she says. “Let’s go. There’s time to make sure everything looks good before you’ll say goodbye to people getting on the bus.”

David’s job—and that of the

other new Red Arrow staffer, Sophie Bergen—is a result of the District 5360 Rotary Employment Partnership in Calgary. Mike Colborne, President and CEO, Pacific Western Transportation—Red Arrow is a subsidiary—says his company is in the “people transportation” business. It’s fitting he’s the first employer to climb on board to move David and Sophie into real work for real pay.

“I truly believe in inclusion for people with disabilities in the workforce, into society,” insists

Mike, who’s also a Rotary Club of Calgary member. “As soon as this initiative became part of Rotary, I said I wanted to be the first employer on board.” Mike will be speaking to his own Club and others about the Partnership and the difference it’s already making in his company.

Jodi, who has been with Red Arrow for

15 years, says the motorcoachs are a luxury service and the company prides itself on excellent customer care. “We’re excited to have David here. We’re really happy to be part of this,” she added. Red Arrow is fastidious about the cleanliness of the lobby area, she adds, “so what David does is really important. As he gets more comfortable with his role, we’ll add more tasks and vary things a bit.”

One of David’s favourite responsibilities is that of goodwill ambassador, saying goodbye to passengers getting on the bus,

and welcoming disembarking passengers to Calgary. With daily motorcoach service to and from several cities, David gets to engage with a lot of customers.

Courtney Adams, Partnership Coordinator in Calgary, says Red Arrow has been a welcoming employer, one that understands the contributions people with developmental disabilities can make. David was hired for the downtown location; Sophie Bergen does similar work with supervisor Barbara Petropoulos in the north end.

“Jodi and Barbara are both great supervisors, assisting as David and Sophie get to know their jobs. They treat them like all other new employees, respecting their talents and challenges. They understand they need a little time to learn the job, but they expect them—and other staff—to work together as part of the Red Arrow family.”

Kathleen Bergen, Sophie’s mother, uses Family Managed Support and having the Rotary initiative has been a lifesaver, giving her much greater help as Sophie enters the job market. “Getting a job is all about who you know,” says Kathleen. “After our intake interview, I felt so relieved to have some help. With FMS, I am in charge of everything! It makes such a difference to have personal contact and rapport with a prospective employer. In the past we have only been able to get work for Sophie if her staff knew someone. This has broadened our base.” Courtney is the liaison with the employer so she “takes so much off my plate.”

David requires some support getting to work and the Graduate

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15 →

developmental disabilities?

(2) Employment: Alberta has a very poor track record with respect to creating employment opportunities for adults with developmental disabilities; approximately only one third of adults, if that, have any employment. Alberta should be able to double this rate. Everyone with the ability to work should have the opportunity and thus a more meaningful and contributing life given their abilities. Alberta needs an Employment First initiative that partners with AACL, service providers and the business community to ensure everyone capable of working has that opportunity.

Ask directly: *Will you support an Employment First initiative for Alberta to double the rate of employment of people with developmental disabilities?*

(3) Access to needed supports: AACL is deeply concerned about the adults with developmental disabilities and their families who currently find themselves ineligible for supports. Two years ago, Alberta changed the rules about which adults with developmental disabilities qualify for support by requiring an IQ score of 70 or less, regardless of their needs for support or protection. This was done without notifying families and without creating alternative supports. Imagine having raised a child with disabilities, providing them with every opportunity to grow and learn, always worrying about the future, only to find out when the child turns 18, they are not eligible for desperately needed supports. Already worried about what will happen

Are you the parent of a child looking for support staff?

AACL's online database has a list of potential staff who are available to provide in-home or community inclusion support to families who have children with disabilities in specific communities.

This service is part of the Supportive Communities: Strengthening Families partnership with Calgary and East Central Alberta Child and Family Services Authorities and is available to families in Lloydminster, Wainwright, Calgary, Airdrie, Cochrane, Canmore and Banff.

Contact one of our facilitators to register for access to the database at www.aacl.org/Findstaffnow or call/email

- Lloydminster, Wainwright and area: Stacey Andrews
306.825.5911; sandrews@aacl.org
- Calgary, Airdrie, Cochrane, Canmore, Banff: Kate Hughson
403.880.5951; khughson@aacl.org

to a son or daughter when they no longer alive, parents suddenly find out there will be no support tomorrow or into the future. This is unconscionable. The new rules have created risk and fear and need to be changed.

Ask directly: *Will you change the eligibility requirements to ensure adults with developmental disabilities will have the supports they require based on their needs and not an IQ score?*

Lastly, everyone is aware those who work in this field and provide the frontline support are poorly paid, contributing to high staff turnover rates and limitations in the quality of support provided. Staff wages need to be improved. Families can share the negative impact of staff turnover and poor quality supports with the leadership candidates in a continuing effort to secure better wages. ■



Dr. Mary Falvey led "Realizing the inclusive school: Parents and teachers creating change together," another well attended AACL Family Conference workshop in inclusive education. Falvey is Dean of the Charter College of Education, California State University, Los Angeles. She has authored four books, including *Believe in My Child with Special Needs*, and *Inclusive & Heterogeneous Education: Assessment, Curriculum, and Instruction*, published by Paul H. Brookes Publishing. She has co-authored over 20 book chapters and numerous journal articles. Dr. Falvey has taught courses in the credential and masters programs in moderate to severe disabilities and inclusive education.

An outstanding experience starts this fall – Family Leadership

This marks the 11th year of AACL's internationally recognized Family Leadership Series. To date more than 300 parents have participated in the Leadership Series and almost all say it is one of the most important learning experiences in their lifelong commitment to the inclusion of their sons and daughters with developmental disabilities. The Series is by invitation only and interested parents are encouraged to apply.

The Series involves a commitment of five weekends, lasting Friday evening to Sunday afternoon over the course of about eight months. The weekends typically take place in Edmonton and AACL covers all expenses and provides childcare and teen or adult support if required. Adults with developmental disabilities, particularly those who are parents, are also welcome to participate in the Leadership Series.

Internationally renowned speakers will also be attending some of the Leadership Series weekends and presenting on a diverse range of topics. Experienced leadership participants, who are also parents, facilitate group discussions. ■

(For more information on the Leadership Series, ph. AACL 780.451.3055 or 1.800.252.7556, Ext. 222 or email: mail@aacl.org.)

Love grows “Loving Relationships” proved to be a touching and heartwarming closing plenary to this year’s 19th annual Family Conference in Edmonton this spring. Couples spoke from their hearts on love and life together. They shared their experiences, how they came to know love, how they decided to become couples, and how they are making their way through life together. Presenters included Dean and Tammy Charbonneau, Heather and Dave Douglas, Harold Barnes and Barb Goode, and Jeremy and Shannon Thiessen.



Dr. Wolf Wolfensberger, 1934–2011

It is with sadness and a sense of profound loss that AACL acknowledges the passing of Dr. Wolf Wolfensberger on February 27, one of the field's most eminent scholars and critical thinkers. Dr. Wolfensberger was the author of a number of seminal theories and initiatives that had an impact on the field of developmental disabilities over the last 40 plus years. His publication, *Normalization*, while a visiting scholar with the CACL National Institute in the early 1970's set the stage for a revolution in thought and action. He was an early leader in promoting deinstitutionalization, integration, the development of comprehensive community services and family advocacy.

He was rigorous in all his efforts, including his commitment to leadership development. A continuous and ever expanding series of training events has led to a cadre of like-minded actors across the globe committed to do better by people with developmental disabilities. Dr. Wolfensberger's greatest legacy lies in fostering a questioning life, in establishing an enduring commitment to question, to seek truth and act as coherently as possible in valuing the lives of people with developmental disabilities.

Written by Bruce Uditsky

Weatherman about town

by Karin Melberg Schwier

When a tornado ripped through Edmonton in the summer of 1987, nine-year-old Daniel Desjardins was glued to Global TV news at home in St. Paul. Twenty-seven people died, 600 were injured and damage was estimated at \$300 million. It wasn't just because his older brother was a disc jockey at a radio station reporting on evacuations as the storm hit. There was something about making sure people understood weather so they would be safe that clicked and stuck for over two decades.

"I have been interested in weather for 24 years," he explains carefully, spreading out his paperwork, which includes a brochure and business card emblazoned with Daniel Desjardins, Security Manager and Student Meteorologist, Severe Weather Centre. "I have my own weather office at my apartment and I have a computer. I tell people and warn them to go to shelters if a bad storm is coming."

His advice about severe weather is simple. "Always be prepared. Always have emergency kit like band-aids and stuff. Water. Food. If you are going somewhere, get updates. When the power goes off, well, that's why we have emergency radio."

Since graduating from high school, Daniel's inclusive post-secondary education and volunteer work has always focused on safety in one form or another. He was paid as a security guard at the St. Paul Provincial building while he was taking the Police and Security course at Grant MacEwan University. "That fits," he says "because police and security warn people in emergencies like storms so it goes together." After graduation, he provided security to various functions and buildings in St. Paul. He volunteered for Citizens on Patrol (COPS) and now works with the Boys and Girls Club where he talks

about weather, environmental issues and the forces of nature. Courses through Athabasca University in meteorology and computer technology have supported his passion in practical ways.

Daniel doesn't restrict his weather forecasting to his home weather office. He makes deliveries around his hometown of St. Paul on his scooter, and has learned who is interested in having a weather chat.



Daniel Desjardins of St. Paul, centre, has taken the weather to heart for years. Residents of his hometown and far-flung family and friends online can count on Daniel's accurate weather forecasts. Daniel's network did some (brain)storm chasing and helped to make one of his dreams come true. He is now doing radio weather forecasts, here with Rick Fawcett, left, and co-host Carlin Burton, who says, "He's a quick study, passionate about anything to do with weather. Everything is always on time and he goes above and beyond what needs to be done. We're happy having a student meteorologist and Daniel is key to keeping the Lakeland informed as to what's happening with the weather."

(Photo by Donna Desjardins)

"There are certain people in town who like to talk about the weather," he says. "People like to know what it will be like tomorrow and I tell them."

"It's a wonderful social skill and interest to have because it's a conversation starter with anyone on the street," Daniel's mother Donna says. "He runs a courier business out of our office and I can hear him talking to people out front. 'It's a really nice day today,' and they agree, and he says, 'Did you know it's going to be plus five today?' Then they

talk about it. It's a great social in."

It might be a way to socialize, but to Daniel, 33, the weather is not simply a reason for idle chitchat. He sometimes gets exasperated with television meteorologists who don't seem to take the weather seriously enough.

"At night, I watch the weather on the news. I think sometimes the meteorologists on the news don't do their jobs right," he frowns. "They don't give you all the information. Sometimes I think they are goofy and it's not a joke, because it's serious. If there's severe weather happening, you better get out of there." Daniel recalls his concern for family and friends during the tornado in Edmonton. "The most

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9 →

important things are my family and my education. In that order. So you have to be safe. Mother Nature is not a joke," he warns.



"If you're going on a trip, do you take a shovel or an umbrella?" Daniel Desjardins of St. Paul gives visitors from Edmonton an update on conditions before they head home. Getting a dose of meteorological advice are, from left, Betty Anderson and Real, Pauline and Danielle Van Brabant.

Movie portrayals, like *Twister*, can be realistic and teach people that being a storm chaser is dangerous. "Helen Hunt was good in that movie, but it's serious," he explains. "Sometimes a bad storm, it can pick up your car and throw it to the next county. So if you're in it, you might end up like a pancake, or even worse you could be dead."

Donna says retooling the way families can support one another in her community has refreshed her store of energy to support Daniel's ambitions. AACL has changed the emphasis of Family Voices so the impact is felt community by community rather than by regions in the province.

"We have started an amazing project in St. Paul, Barrhead and Onoway where families are supporting

families in each community," she says. "It has been awesome. Families who have been there can help guide new families, who in turn, challenge us to reach deeper into community." AACL arranged for a visit from Connie Lyle O'Brien who did a Personal Futures Planning workshop in St. Paul for the local Family Voices group.

"I brought Daniel's network to the table. I was beginning to get tired. It takes a lot of energy, constantly advocating and initiating inclusion," Donna admits. "But I hadn't realized the passion and caring that this network has for Daniel. Anyway, they decided that they were going to take Daniel's passion for weather one step further. So, off they went to the radio station. Guess what? Daniel now provides the weather for the Farm Report on CHLW twice a day." Not only that, but another member of Daniel's network formed a work bee and soon Daniel had a full weather station installed at his apartment.

Now, Daniel is on his computers daily, and extracting info from the weather station to bring to St. Paul and area. He still does his courier deliveries on his scooter and chats with all of the farmers at the post office.

"We are also working on some way that a Weather Club can be formed at the local Boys and Girls Club," says Donna, "Daniel would bring in information about the weather each week for the kids to talk about and understand. So, Daniel's world continues to unfold and we continue to run to catch up! It is amazing how our children influence and enrich our lives, and surprise us with the directions they take."

Daniel is taking the developments in his life in stride, always with one eye on the horizon. "I am interested in all kinds of weather, but I like nice weather so I can take my scooter out." Daniel smiles. "I know already when it is going to be a nice day. Good weather, that's most important." ■

(Visit Daniel Desjardin's Weather Watch at www.dss.pwac.net/custom.html.)

Don't miss it!

The 20th Annual Family Conference

Apr. 13-14
2012

Close to 700 individuals, professionals and family members attended our 19th annual Family Conference this year. The overwhelmingly positive feedback was much appreciated. Looking forward to seeing everyone again in 2012.

Association celebrates inclusion

AACL annually invites nominations for the *Community Inclusion*, *Community Living*, *Cormack Memorial*, and *National Inclusive Education Awards*. These awards were presented at the 19th annual Family Conference in Edmonton. It is a small gesture of thanks to recognize the ongoing commitment by people throughout the province who are determined to make lives better, and inclusion a reality.

The Community Inclusion Award is the most prestigious award presented by AACL and is only given when an individual or organization demonstrates exemplary community leadership. It is presented to individuals or groups whose efforts have been inspiring and outstanding in enabling the full and meaningful inclusion of individuals with developmental disabilities in community life. Presenting three awards this year were AACL President Barb MacIntyre, Robin Acton, Director of Community Initiatives, and Wendy McDonald, Development Director. The winners are:

The Grande Prairie Rotary Club for their leadership in ensuring the Rotary Employment Partnership in Grande Prairie continued when government funding was withdrawn. Without the Partnership, the individuals who had found employment through it were at risk of losing their jobs. Others in the community who were desperate to be employed would have fewer opportunities. The Club understood the difference the Partnership makes not only to individuals with developmental disabilities but also to the businesses that had become employers. The Grande Prairie Rotary Club exemplifies “service above self.” As a result, almost every individual was able to maintain their employment and increased number of individuals are now working. President Karen Munjak accepted the award.

Mark Starratt, Past Rotary District Governor 5360, for his successful leadership and commitment to ensure establishment of the Rotary Employment Partnership in Calgary. (See full story pages 4–5.)

Jackie Hobal, Rotary District Governor 5370, demonstrated true leadership and commitment to affording people with developmental disabilities the same opportunity to have a career, a place to belong and contribute as all other Albertans. During her tenure as Governor, the Partnership has blossomed and 160 individuals found jobs, thanks to Rotary Clubs. Rotarians have been inspired to get

involved because of Jackie’s tireless promotion of the Partnership and her solid belief in the capacity of everyone to contribute.

The Community Living Award is given to individuals or organizations in Alberta who, on a day-to-day basis, promote the concept and spirit of inclusive community living. The winners are:

Grande Prairie Regional College When the Northwest Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) Board suspended its funding in support of the inclusion of students with developmental disabilities, the College made a commitment to continue working with AACL to ensure that students with developmental disabilities were welcomed. Their decision to continue to work with AACL to support students with developmental disabilities is exceptional and sets an example for post secondary institutions. Inclusive post secondary opportunities continue to be available to students in Grande Prairie. Keith and Pam Moore presented the award to Carmen Haakstad, Vice-President, External Relations.

The King’s University College for welcoming and facilitating the inclusion of students with developmental disabilities. Their exceptional commitment to embrace and welcome students goes far beyond the classroom to all aspects of campus life from the residences to students being engaged in representing the institution to creating accommodating policies. The King’s University College makes an amazing difference in the lives of students with developmental disabilities. Mike, Sharon and Matthew Mussolum presented the



The National Inclusive Education Award was presented to Crawford Plains School, Edmonton Public School Board. On hand for the prize giving was Barb McIntyre, AACL President; Kim Guay, AACL Family Voices Edmonton; Jeanne Carter, Principal, Crawford Plains School; Roselyne Rudiak and Chantal Davis, teachers; Bendina Miller CACL President; and Dianne McConnell, Director, Action on Inclusion, Alberta Education.

award to Dr. Harry Spaling, Vice-President, Academic.

Stantec for its commitment to employ individuals with developmental disabilities. The support of this company and its employees in providing a welcoming and inclusive environment has been exemplary. Tammy Yu has been employed part-time as a file clerk at Stantec since October 2010. She is completing her studies at NorQuest College in the Administrative Professional Program. She will be hired full time when her classes are completed. Theresa and Tammy Yu presented the award to Keith Shillington, Regional Leader and Vice-President.

Gerry and Elaine Wood for outstanding support and extremely generous contribution over the last five years in sponsoring AACL's fund development breakfasts in Calgary. Their sponsorship has meant that all the funds raised go directly to support individuals and families. In the last four years as a result of their leadership with the fund development initiative in Calgary, AACL has been able to raise over a million dollars between Edmonton and Calgary. This would not have been possible without their commitment.

Edmonton Warriors Lacrosse League for a commitment to include children with developmental disabilities on its team and ensuring fully inclusive and valued experiences as team members. Dennis Dykes says the club never questioned his son Griffin's involvement and in fact has facilitated Griffin's participation and contribution. In turn, the team members have been outstanding in their embracing and welcoming of Griffin as a player. Dennis, Griffin, Aeden and Nolan Dykes and Griffin's teammate Chase Wren presented the award to Jim Andrews and Griffin's teammates.

Melinda Paschink, Teacher's Aide, Strathcona High School. Phillip Butterfield and Karen Dyberg,



The National Inclusive Education Award is provided by the Canadian Association for Community Living and AACL to nationally recognize those teachers, schools and school districts exemplary in the commitment and practice of inclusive education. This year, two awards were given in Alberta; one was presented to Belevedere School, Edmonton. From left, back: Barb MacIntyre, AACL President; Christine Duong, parent; Sandee Lowe, Principal of Belevedere; Myra Randall, Administrative Assistant; Dana Dickout, Teacher; Michelle Wilson, Teacher; Virgie Stefuik, Educational Assistant; Bendina Miller, CACL President, and Dianne McConnell, Director, Action on Inclusion, Alberta Education. In front: Gerry Duong, Student; Franca Sellito, Custodian; Ally Ng, Teacher, representing Kim Sauer, Teacher; and Lolita Mayes, Educational Assistant.

parents of James Butterfield, acknowledged Melinda's contribution: "There are so many individuals who have worked, assisted and been involved in James' life, it's hard to know where to start. However, one individual who really stands out is Melinda Paschink, his full-time Teaching Assistant at Scona High School. Melinda has been with James since 2009 and we are blessed to have such a caring, committed and focused person to work with James. She knows when to step in, when to step back and always keeps us informed in school issues, student volunteering and out-of-school activities. Melinda puts in additional hours to ensure she is there for James, especially to proactively ensure an inclusive approach to his learning."

The Colonel Eric W. and Dr. Barbara V. Cormack Memorial Award is given to an individual or individuals who have made an outstanding, long-term voluntary contribution to serving the interests of people with developmental disabilities and their families. The Cormacks were pioneers in establishing services in Alberta and bringing families together. Colonel Cormack was a past-president of AACL. The award is presented jointly by AACL and the Robin Hood Association. Karen Bartell and Denise Laverdure-Sych of St. Paul presented this year's award to **Donna and Ray Desjardins** whose commitment and passion have been an inspiration to families not only in their own community, but across the province. ■

Meet our Dream Makers

In each issue of Connections, you will meet one of AACL's generous Dream Makers. This group of outstanding community-minded people from all walks of life have chosen to support the hopes and aspirations of Albertans with developmental disabilities and their families. AACL Dream Makers make a minimum five year financial contribution at one of three pledge levels: The Dreams of a Child or an Adult (\$1000/yr), The Dreams of a Family (\$5000/yr), or The Dreams of a Community (\$10,000+/yr). Because of these generous donors, AACL is able to make a difference in the lives of individuals and families, and change communities. In this issue, meet **Mark Starratt** and **Jennifer Hayes Starratt** of Calgary.

Mark is the Director, Wealth Management and Portfolio Manager of the Starratt Team with Richardson GMP Limited. Jennifer is at home with two-year-old Alex and the couple became AACL Dream Makers last year. Mark's initial connection with AACL came through his life as a Rotarian. He knew Rotarians Jackie Hobal, former District Governor 5370, and Wendy McDonald, Rotarian and former AACL president, through his role as District Governor 5360. Mark was aware of AACL's Employment Partnership with Rotary Clubs and championed its development in Calgary (see story pp. 4-5). Mark's dedication was recognized this spring with an AACL Community Inclusion Award, AACL's highest honour.

"Everybody is different in terms of priorities and the way in which they want to give. My family is very blessed to have experienced good fortune in business, so we're in a position to give back. Whether it's a couple of scholarships at post-secondary institutions or by giving to our community in other ways, the idea of giving time, talent and treasure appeals to me.

"Whether you give of your time, talent or if you write a cheque, organizations you believe in need all of those things to be successful. Money is important, but some of those softer contributions are equally beneficial. My wife is very generous in spirit and we get involved in different ways. As fate would have it, about a year ago Alex contracted a virus that settled in his spinal cord. It's not a developmental disability and he'll grow out of it, but we've leaned on people in AACL like Wendy, Bruce and Robin. I'm a big believer that the people who come into your life do so for a reason. When you give, you tend to receive what you need in return in ways that you might not understand at the time.

"Through their financial commitment, Dream Makers allow an organization like AACL to trust in the sustainability of the supports



Jen, Alex and Mark

they provide, rather than hoping the government will come through. From a Dream Maker point of view, there are many stepping up to provide a meaningful amount of money, but there are some of us who have the ability to contribute more. Perhaps it is a significant cheque or the commitment to leave a legacy as part of your estate plan. Either way, it ensures that an organization like AACL will be around for the long term.

"It's exciting that there are younger professionals taking more of a leadership role in giving back to their community. We are hoping

that this trend continues, as there are an increasing number of families who have the capacity to give. Jen and I decided as a family, if our leadership encourages my colleagues who have been successful to see a way to give to those things they're passionate about, then our giving means that much more." ■

(If you'd like to become an AACL Dream Maker or would like more information about AACL, contact Wendy McDonald, ph. 780.451.3055, ext. 222, toll free at 1.800.252.7556 or email: wmcdonald@aacl.org.)

Mark brought a number of Calgary Rotary Clubs together to meet with AACL and learn about the Partnership. With his encouragement and the support of AACL, six clubs made a commitment to work together to create valued employment possibilities. It was this community commitment, made in writing and in person by Rotarians and their clubs that convinced Dr. Alex Hillyard, CEO, Calgary Region Community Board Persons with Developmental Disabilities to support the Partnership and invest the funds to enable AACL to hire a local coordinator.

As the Chair of the local Partnership Steering Committee, Mark says one of the elements for success is identifying a "champion" within a Rotary club to keep the initiative at the forefront of the club's thinking. Some good old-fashioned business rivalry doesn't hurt either.

"I think Calgary's pretty competitive so when we hear Edmonton Rotarians or those in Grande Prairie or Lloydminster say they've been involved for so many years and this is how many jobs they've created, we can quietly say, well, that's great and maybe we can do better!" Mark laughs. "When the community steps up and takes care of our own rather than having the government look after people, I think it's a very Albertan way of doing things. At the end of the day," he adds, "it's all about creating the opportunity for long-term, meaningful employment for people with developmental disabilities."

Mark credits AACL's Courtney Adams, the Partnership Coordinator in Calgary, for "pivotal support" to ensure the ongoing success of the initiative. "Rotarians are busy people, so knowing there is a resource like Courtney who can take a lot of the time pressures off, help get things set up and working well right from the beginning, really makes this work."

Earlier this year, Mark received an AACL Community Inclusion Award at the family conference in recognition of his tenacity, leadership and commitment to the Partnership. He secured the support of six clubs in Calgary and ensured the Partnership was profiled at the District 5360 conference in 2010. He personally sponsored the session. He also arranged for the initiative to be profiled at District 5360 Make Dreams Real training session that fall. Mark agrees that having that club champion is important, but when Rotary employers

are presented with a good business plan, they go for it.

"When I talk to fellow Rotarians about this initiative, I see a lot of light bulb moments when they get it," Mark says. "When they get it, they are ready to make it work in their business and with Courtney's support, some creative and innovative employment can happen."

Robin Acton, AACL Director of Community Initiatives and also a Rotarian, is the AACL provincial lead on the Partnership. "Rotary has an ethic of 'service above self' and is committed to community," she explains. "These Partnerships are about community capacity building and represent a markedly different approach from the traditional way that people with developmental disabilities have found work. It takes a Rotary member only a few calls to fellow Rotarians or business associates to create the possibility of a meaningful job for someone with a developmental disability."

Mark agrees that the value-added aspect is not only employment for the individual employee. The rest of the staff and the business itself benefit in equally significant ways.

"This is about meaningful work for people," he says. "It's not low paying jobs or charity. This is real work that goes a long way toward eliminating those financial and social barriers faced by people with developmental disabilities and a lot of worry for families. We also talk a lot about the impact this can have on morale in the workplace. Intellectually, the Rotary employer understands that. But when they see it really happening as a person with a developmental disability becomes part of the staff, it's the type of philosophy that is contagious. It's so important to recognize that two people can now tell family and friends they work at Red Arrow," says Mark. "But I'm really looking forward to hearing Red Arrow a year from now talk about what a difference hiring David and Sophie has made in their company." ■

(For more information about the Calgary Rotary Employment Initiative, contact Kate Hughson, Suite 212, 4014 Macleod Trail SE, Calgary, T2G 2R7, 403.539.6057 or khughson@aacl.org. For information about the provincial picture: Robin Acton, 11724 Kingsway Avenue, Edmonton, T5G 0X5, 780.451.3055, toll free 1.800.252.7556, or racton@aacl.org.)

What's new?

Watch this column for details on new developments, projects and partnerships that AACL has underway of interest to people with developmental disabilities and their families.

Each month, AACL hosts a number of free, one-hour information sessions to introduce more people to the organization and the difference it makes in the lives of families and individuals with developmental disabilities.

Sessions are held over the noon hour and guests are provided with a free lunch. These are not fundraising sessions and are designed to give people a better understanding of the organization and the work AACL does.

Sessions are held in Edmonton and Calgary but can be arranged in other communities and even for organizations, such as businesses, on request. Edmonton sessions are held at the main AACL office, 11724 Kingsway Avenue, and Calgary sessions are held at the new Calgary AACL office, Suite 212, 4014 Macleod Trail SE.

Upcoming Edmonton Information Sessions

September 23, 2011
October 28, 2011
November 25, 2011
January 20, 2012
February 17, 2012
March 23, 2012
April 12, 2012

Upcoming Calgary Information Sessions

September 13, 2011
November 8, 2011

(If you'd like to attend one of these sessions, contact AACL with the date you would like to attend. We ask that you confirm your attendance at least three days before any given sessions so that lunch can be provided. For more information, phone AACL in Edmonton, 780.451.3055; toll free 1.800.252.7556; or email: mail@aacl.org; in Calgary, phone 403.717.0361.)

Wildly successful breakfast in Lloydminster changes lives, communities

Wendy McDonald, AACL's Development Director, really believes that a good breakfast makes all the difference. One held June 2nd is proof positive. The Changing Lives, Changing Communities fundraising breakfast was held in partnership with the Lloydminster Association for Community Living.

"Over 200 people attended," says McDonald. "We have raised \$85,000.00 to date. We have nine new Dream Makers!" AACL Dream Makers make financial commitments of \$1,000 to \$10,000 or more over five years in one of three pledge levels: The Dreams of a Child or an Adult, The Dreams of a Family, or The Dreams of a Community.

AACL extends its warmest thanks to Stacey Andrews, President, Lloydminster Association for Community Living, the Shiner Family, Glenn DeSchover and Dave Watchell of A Plus Machining, Glenn Fagnan, a partner with Midwest Communications, and Kathy Le as the Master of Ceremonies. The proceeds of the event are shared equally between the two associations.

"All these wonderful people participated in the program and ensured the breakfast was a success," McDonald adds. "A special thanks to Mach I Diesel Repair Limited for sponsorship of the event. I also want to thank Robin Acton, Past-President of both AACL and the Lloydminster Association for her hard work in supporting this event." ■

AACL Fundraising Breakfasts: the most important meal of the day

The Edmonton breakfast will be held October 13th, 2011, 7:30–8:30 a.m. at the Westin Edmonton, co-sponsored in Edmonton by Servus Credit Union and Stantec, with media sponsor CTV.

The Calgary breakfast will be on October 19, 2011, 7:30–8:30 a.m. Location TBA. Co-sponsored by Servus Credit Union and Wood Automotive Group.

(If you are interested in attending, hosting a table, or more information, contact Shawn Ergang at 780.451.3055, ext. 246 or by email: sergang@aacl.org.)

Centre holds official opening in September

The official opening of the Darrell Cook Family Managed Supports Resource Centre will be held September 8 in Calgary. The Centre was envisioned by AACL as a means of making Family Managed Supports (FMS) more accessible to a wider range of interested families. The idea was embraced by parents, allied organizations and Family Voices–Calgary through a series of consultations and focus groups facilitated by AACL and Dr. Anne Hughson, University of Calgary. In response to the desire and interest of families to better utilize FMS to create more inclusive lives, Dr. Alex Hillyard, CEO, Calgary PDD agreed to provide the funding for the Centre and to work in

partnership with AACL and Calgary families.

This is the first Family Managed Supports Resource Centre in Alberta and has been named in honour of Darrell Cook, a parent who played an active leadership role in the community and in the Centre's development. It is located at the Calgary AACL office, Suite 212, 4014 Macleod Trail SE, with a virtual site underway to support families who use FMS.

The Centre provides assistance to current or interested families by providing resources, training and workshops, practical assistance and family mentors for guidance. The Centre also offers families

opportunities to connect and share information with other families using FMS.

An "invitation only" event will be held September 8 as the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports officially opens the Resource Centre. The open house for families, the public and agency representatives will be held 3–5 p.m. and everyone is welcome to attend. The Coordinator of the Centre is Pat Winter who can be reached via email at pwinter@aac1.org or ph. 403.539.8192.

(For information about the opening, contact Ashley Frame, 403.539.8173.)

Summer Institute draws 75

This year's annual Summer Institute on Inclusive Education, ran July 4–22 with 75 students participating. The University of Calgary, in cooperation with AACL, and as part of the Community Rehabilitation and Disability Studies Summer Institute, offers three half-courses of interest to teachers, administrators, parents, and others who are committed to educating students with developmental disabilities in the regular classroom. The courses are offered for credit and audit.

The half-courses included Ethics of Caring and Inclusion: Implications for Educational Reform, Adapting Curriculum in Schools from K-12 and Addressing Challenging Behaviours in the Classroom.

"For close to 20 years Community Rehabilitation and Disability Studies has partnered with AACL to offer these courses. It is an excellent example of how a university and community organization can work together to create more inclusive communities," says Dr. Anne Hughson, Director and Associate Professor, Community Rehabilitation & Disability Studies, Community Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine. ■

(For information on the 2012 Summer Institute, contact: Beth Parrott at 403.220.2271/403.220.8587 or email: parrott@ucalgary.ca.)

➔ "RED ARROW", CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

Support Program, part of the inclusive post-secondary initiative at the University of Calgary, where David was a student, provides it. Sophie is a recent high school grad; her family moved to Calgary from Athabasca. Courtney is there to assist Red Arrow to accommodate its new employees.

Mike Colborne says no one had to convince him of the value of the Partnership. "This is so good for society and business. It demonstrates that people with disabilities are valuable and can contribute not just their skills, but it's a great equalizer. It gives not just employees with disabilities self-confidence and self-worth, but that goes for their co-workers, too. In today's society when business moves fast, this is a great reminder that a company has a heart." ■

– Karin Melberg Schwier

Reg Peters Resource Centre

The AACL Reg Peters Library has over 400 videos and DVDs, 2000 print materials, 45 journals and 70 newsletters. It is one of the most extensive holding of resources in Alberta on inclusion, community living and disability. Contact Lisa Snyder, ph. 780.451.3055, ext. 225 or email library@aac1.org.

Pursuing inclusive recreation and leisure workshop focus

November 18–19, Lloydminster

December 2–3, Calgary

A unique workshop, “Pursuing Leisure Passions,” is for parents who want to be more thoughtful about supporting sons and daughters with developmental disabilities to be included in recreation and leisure. Inclusion in recreation can bring more fun, meaning and connection to the lives of children and adults with developmental disabilities.

This energizing event, led by Judith McGill, will be held in two locations this November and December; first in Lloydminster November 18–19; second in Calgary, December 2–3. Each features a Friday evening, all-day Saturday format. Unique interactions between participants and Judith will lead to a fuller appreciation of leisure and how it can create joy and balance in family life.

Making inclusive recreation a reality for families in Alberta was the focus of a session at the AACL Family Conference. Supportive Communities, Strengthening Families staff and families talked about working with community recreation providers and individuals with developmental disabilities.

“Recreation providers typically do want to welcome children with disabilities,” says Stacey Andrews, parent and coordinator of Supportive Communities partnership, “but are not sure how to do it. AACL works with them so that families and individuals are welcomed, supported and included.”

Kate Hughson, Calgary Supportive Communities staff adds, “Most groups are able to see past an individual’s disability and find ways to involve them. There are many examples of children and youth participating in competitive sports like football and lacrosse.”

While inclusive activities may seem a little risky for families who haven’t had the experience, segregated activities have the “illusion of being safe, but can keep the door closed to an enriched life,” says Karen Bartell, AACL Vice-President whose daughter is included in community programs. “And not just for the child with a disability, but for everyone.”

“When we open the door to the possibilities of being included in local recreation and leisure

activities,” insists Stacey, “we open endless opportunities for future friendships and growth development.” The workshop will help parents discover their sons and daughters’ passions and what lights them up. Parents will learn how to figure out the talents of their children and help others see their abilities and contributions.

“As parents we want to go beyond enrolling our kids with developmental disabilities in programs just to keep them busy or give us a break,” says Stacey. “We want their activities to add meaning to their lives. Leisure can be a means of building connections with other kids who are equally as passionate. We’ll learn how to make this a reality.” The workshop will also be of value to young adults with developmental disabilities and recreation and leisure providers. The workshop expands on insights and concepts in McGill’s book *Developing Leisure Identities: A Pilot Project*. ■

(To attend Judith McGill’s workshops, visit www.aacl.org or contact Stacey Andrews Community Development Advocate, ph: 306.825.5911; cell: 780.872.4609 or email: sandrews@aacl.org).

Publications Mail

Publications Mail Agreement 40011812
Return undeliverable addresses to:
AACL
11724 Kingsway Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5G 0X5

Please deliver to: