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National Inclusive Education Week  February 15–21, 2009

Rangers on patrol: David Meisner of Calgary, right, and support person Cam Buechert, left, with Darrell Howard, City of Calgary Parks, as they start their shift with the Parks Volunteer Ranger Parkways Bike Team.
On the cover

David Meisner of Calgary, right, and support person Cam Buechert, left, get some instructions from Darrell Howard with City of Calgary Parks before heading out on patrol. “When Dave’s on his bike, it’s just something that really resonates with him,” says Buechert. “Being involved with like-minded people who enjoy the outdoors not only educates park users about the park, but also about the contributions people with disabilities can make and they can do what they want to do. It’s a way of giving back, too, and David can be a contributing person instead of the traditional way people with disabilities were perceived.” Meisner, an avid outdoorsman, and Buechert have been volunteering both with the City of Calgary Park Ranger program and with Friends of Fish Creek for several years. The beauty of the role lies in not only David’s love of physical activity and for bike riding, but also in his contribution to the enjoyment of Calgary and Fish Creek green spaces by others.

“Sometimes accommodations are made for people with disabilities and it ends up just focusing the glare and attention is on the disability, not the person,” Buechert insists. “We build in some freedom and independence; we can each take a parallel path and meet up at the other end when we’re out on patrol. I think he gets a lot of satisfaction out of it.” For the complete story, see page 8.

Community Rehabilitation and Disability Studies
Inclusive Education Summer Institute 2009
July 6 – 24, 2009

The University of Calgary, in cooperation with Alberta Association for Community Living, offers as part of the Community Rehabilitation and Disability Studies Summer Institute three half courses on Inclusive Education. These courses will be of interest to teachers, administrators, parents and others who are committed to educating students with developmental disabilities in the regular classroom. These courses are offered for undergraduate/graduate credit or audit.

Ethics of Caring and Inclusion: Implications for Educational Reform
July 6–10

Adapting Curriculum in Schools from K-12
July 13–17

Addressing Challenging Behaviors in the Classroom
July 20–24

If you are interested in registering for any of these courses or if you require further information, please contact: Beth Parrott, ph. 403.220.2271 or parrott@ucalgary.ca. As a guideline, keep in mind the following information: Students who have not been accepted into a University of Calgary program or have not previously taken courses at the University of Calgary need to fill out an Open Studies Form. The form must be faxed to Beth Parrott fax: 403.220.6494 or mailed to: Beth Parrott, Community Rehabilitation and Disability Studies, EDT 413, 2500 University Drive NW, Calgary, AB T2N 1N4. In order to audit courses, a Permission to Audit Form must be completed. All of these credit courses have university transfer status. If you take these courses on an audit basis they are not transferable to any university program.

Limited bursaries may be available for residents of Alberta through Alberta Association for Community Living for University of Calgary credit and audit participants. Contact AACL: mail@aacl.org.

For more information, contact:

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How history impacts current practice

IQ tests claim to do at least two things. One is to accurately measure ‘intelligence’ and second is to do so relative to standard scores (e.g., what the average person would score). Hence individuals are rated as being of average intelligence, more intelligent than average or less. In the field of intelligence testing there have been many debates as to whether these claims are true and if so, to what degree – is there one intelligence or multiple intelligences, are the tests culturally biased, are the tests properly standardized, has the population changed upon which standardization was based, etc. There is less than universal agreement by psychologists on the merits or meaning of IQ tests.

One of the original purposes of IQ tests was to determine or predict which students would require additional help to be successful in school. It then is an interesting question as to how these IQ scores evolved into stigmatizing, categorizing, racially prejudiced and negatively life-defining outcomes for students with developmental disabilities and others. Prior to the advent of IQ tests, “scientists” proposed many other methods for comparing intelligence between individuals, genders, races and ethnic groups. These ranged from measuring the weight of brains, the length of arms and variations in facial features or skulls. Initially these tests were considered accurate measures of what was understood to be universally and irrefutably true. Men were smarter than women and white men were smarter than anyone else. And the story gets worse from here for people with developmental disabilities.

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Parents may choose to cooperate with IQ testing, but with no illusion that consequentially they will gain cooperation on matters important to them. It is perfectly appropriate to choose the right challenges for your family, to conserve energy for future needs and thus at times agree to an IQ test to avoid a struggle. But it is helpful to be aware of the consequences and not assume positive ends will be achieved.

With respect to school, an IQ test cannot be conducted on a student without parental permission. Parents can refuse without much consequence, other than that which comes from challenging authority. School districts are required by law to provide an appropriate education, including the required resources, to all students and this is not dependent on an IQ test or the results of one. While Alberta Education policies reference IQ tests and scores for coding or categorizing, this is at the level of policy—not law—and nowhere does Alberta Education stipulate a child must have an IQ test.
In November, we offered two sessions at the Northeast Alberta Community Board for Persons with Developmental Disabilities Conference. The session entitled Transitions and Daring to Dream included further discussions about what happens when you, the family, are no longer there. They were good discussions that made us realize the importance of communication on an ongoing basis for our families. This is where the idea of the teleconferences evolved. We held our first teleconference, Understanding Registered Disability Savings Plans, in November. In January and February, we discussed Family Managed Services and funding options through PDD.

It is our intent to hold a teleconference on the first Tuesday evening of each month: March 3, April 7, May 5 and June 2, 2009 are planned. We have found that the subject matter of these teleconferences often fluctuates based on what we hear from our families. Certainly, some of the topics on our “must have” list are wills, estates, guardianship, trusts, Disability Related Employment Support, housing, and inclusive post secondary education. We are excited about the resources that we can draw upon through AAACL.

We are pleased to introduce our new staff support for the Northeast Region. Leane Maguire and Shayna Miles-Ingram will be sharing the role of Community Development Advocate for the Northeast region. Leane resides in Busby and will be responsible for supporting families in the western part of the region and for the development of the Employment Partnership with Rotarians in the communities of Barrhead, Westlock, Whitecourt and Athabasca. Shayna resides in Cold Lake and will be responsible to support families in the eastern part of the region. Together Shayna and Leane will support the development of the Family Voices network for the Northeast Region. We are pleased to welcome them and you will be meeting them at many functions and activities. We are excited about the fact that one lives in the eastern part of the region and one lives in the western part. Certainly, trying to support, advocate and communicate in a region our size is always a challenge so we hope this will help. Each brings very special gifts and enthusiasm to our Network. Please feel free to contact either staff to discuss your concerns or issues you are presently encountering. To reach them: Shayna Miles-Ingram, cell 780.920.8076, email: smilesingram@aacl.org; Leane Maguire, cell 780.206.5522 e-mail: lmaguire@aacl.org, or contact AAACL’s toll free number 1.800.255.7556, ext. 222 to leave a message for either staff.

Our long-term goal is to have a Family Voices parent representative in each of the 10 larger communities in northeast Alberta.

In this issue of Connections, we feature Family Voices Northeast with Co-chair Donna Desjardins of St. Paul:

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Our long-term goal is to have a Family Voices parent representative in each of the 10 larger communities in northeast Alberta.

(To contact Donna, ph: 780.645.5516 or donna@desjardins-co.com. Her co-chair is Niki-Lou Mackin of Fort McMurray, ph: 780.790.0750; e-mail nikilou@telus.net.)

Family Voices Northeast hosts teleconference series

Alberta is divided into six regions—Northwest, Northeast, Edmonton, Central, Calgary and South. AAACL has developed a network of families, known as Family Voices (FV), to advocate regionally on behalf of children and adults with developmental disabilities. These networks work with school districts to improve inclusive education, with Child and Family Services Authorities to improve supports to families and with Persons with Developmental Disabilities Community Boards to improve supports to adults with developmental disabilities. A Community Development Advocate supports each network:

Northwest: Aimee Steinke, asteinke@aacl.org.
South: Danielle Hanna/Tina Fowler, dhanna@lacle.ca/tfowler@lacle.ca.
Central: position vacant.
Northeast: Shayna Ingram, smilesingram@aacl.org or Leane Maguire, lmaguire@aacl.org.
Calgary: Allison Pilon, apilon@aacl.org.
Edmonton: Lynn Thompson, lthompson@aacl.org.

In this issue of Connections, we feature Family Voices Northeast with Co-chair Donna Desjardins of St. Paul:

Fill up with Husky  Every time you use your AAACL Husky gas card, the Association receives 2% of the purchase price. A little adds up to a lot. Get your Husky card from AAACL and fill up to support people with developmental disabilities.
Determination, inclusion foundations
for football fanatic
by Karin Melberg Schwier

Sometimes Wendy McDonald shakes her head when she thinks about how her son Kyle got involved in football. The McDonalds were “not football people by any stretch,” she says. When 11-year-old Kyle came home waving a flyer his teacher had given him to the open house for the West Edmonton Raiders Football Club, a member of the Capital District Minor Football Association, she says she did what any reasonable parent of a child with or without a disability would do, especially in her case since Kyle’s also legally blind. “I threw the flyer away and figured that was the end of it.” It wasn’t. Boys may want to play football but most mothers shudder at the thought.

Wendy and her husband Blaine had always believed in Kyle’s inclusion and that he should pursue his dreams—they just never imagined he would want to play football. Even though Kyle nearly died at birth given his disabilities and prematurity, they supported his inclusion in school and the community, focusing on his strengths and abilities. Kyle is a successful member of a community bowling league and an avid golfer regardless of his disabilities and vision challenges. But football was beyond their imagination and Wendy worried about his safety. She thought there might be limits to his inclusion.

“He woke up the morning of the open house and informed us that ‘today’s the day and here’s the time and place we have to go,’” laughs Wendy. “This was a kid, who like most kids his age, never remembered to brush his teeth or put his clothes away.” Wendy and her husband Blaine decided to go but worried about Kyle being disappointed or rejected. They arrived and Kyle’s eyes grew excited. His parents had never seen him get that animated about something on his own, something they hadn’t encouraged and promoted.

Over the crowd noise, with barbecuing burger smoke in the air, the McDonalds tried to explain to one of the volunteers the challenges they imagined, but they were directed to Wojtek Wojcicki, the head of football operations. Again, they tried to explain their fears and wanted the coach to understand Kyle.

“Coach Wojtek told us he’d like to talk to Kyle on his own,” Wendy recalls. After Kyle turned down the coach’s offer of a hamburger, then a pop, then chips, Coach finally hit on an acceptable bottle of water. The two of them went for a walk around the stadium. “This guy had never met Kyle; we’d never met him,” says Wendy. “He comes back with Kyle and Coach Wojtek gives us a thumbs up. We nearly died.”

That first year, Wendy woke up each morning of practice day with a pain in the pit of her stomach. “It was scary! I was constantly on edge that he was going to get hurt, physically and emotionally, that it wasn’t going to work, all of it. I kept thinking these guys don’t know anything about disability. They’re just football dads, volunteers. Kyle needed help to get his helmet on and off—would he be safe?”

Kyle McDonald, Number 22: “I feel very proud and happy to be part of a team. Yes, I always think of myself as a football player.”

How did Kyle wake up on those days? “Pumped,” Wendy remembers. “Absolutely excited. From the minute this started, he was excited. At every practice, we told the coaches if you need help from us just ask. Finally we got the impression, a hint really, to just leave them alone. They would come to us if they had any concerns.”

Kyle participated in everything that every other player did. The first year, Kyle was on the Silver Pee Wee team. Yes, he continues to play year after year and in his second year Kyle scored a touchdown with the support of both his team and the opposing team. The other team was just as proud of Kyle as his own teammates. The coach of the opposing team was very proud of his players for realizing there were more
important things in life than winning.

The coaches, these dads without any training in disability, just figured out how to include Kyle. They made sure he was in two or three plays a quarter when they felt it was safe. “The kids might have to remind Kyle about his position and or pattern to run but they did it so subtly he never stood out,” Wendy says. “They figured it out. The one thing about this club is that they insist that everybody is treated with respect.”

At the end-of-season awards banquet, the coaches spoke about what a transforming effect having Kyle as a member of the team had on the club. It was a perspective shift for Kyle’s family. “We were absolutely blown away at how much the team valued Kyle and had grown because of him,” Wendy recalls. “We had always thought of it as how much Kyle had learned and grown, but then we understood the impact he had on the organization and his teammates. He showed up at every practice with a smile on his face and never missed a game. He cheered everybody on, even if they got a penalty. He was a guy who was enthusiastic and it taught his teammates about having that attitude. Sometimes parents need to get out of the way.”

Kyle got a club leather jacket with West Edmonton Raiders emblazoned across the back. “When he walks into the school with his jacket on, he’s viewed as a football player,” says his mom. “He’s not just that kid with a disability.”

**Connections interviews Kyle McDonald**

**Most Sportsmanlike Player, Bantam Black, Edmonton**

Why do you like football so much? Why football and not soccer or hockey?
I thought it would be easier for me to play. And I like hitting and running and you can’t do that in soccer. I also liked the equipment—helmets, shoulder pads. It is such a great sport. I love football.

What do you think of your coach and teammates?
My coach and teammates are very nice. They make playing football a lot of fun. Coach Wojtek makes football really exciting. I learn lots from my coaches and team mates.

What is your job as part of the team?
Different players do different things. My job was to be on special teams — the kickoff team. Sometimes I played wide receiver and sometimes I played safety.

Have you ever been hurt? Do you still have all your teeth?
Yes, I still have all my teeth because football players have to wear mouthguards at all times. If I didn’t have my mouthguard in, my coaches wouldn’t let me play or practice. It is a rule. No, I have never gotten hurt. Sometimes I was worried about getting hurt but practicing getting hit, blocks and falls helped.

Who is your favourite NFL player? Are you an Eskimos fan?
In the NFL my favorite player is Tom Brady with the New England Patriots. I am an Eskimo fan and I worked with the Eskimos last season. I helped at one practice a week and was on the bench during all the home games!

Your very first coach took you for a walk around the field to talk to you about why you wanted to play. What did you like about that guy?
His name is Wojtek Wojcicki and he is a good guy. He’s fun. He’s a good teacher and he thinks he is funny!

What do you do in the winter to keep in shape for next season?
On Tuesday nights I go to the gym and work out and in Phys Ed at school. I like to go swimming, almost every week. I bowl every week. This year I will play in the Midget level and it will start pretty soon. The season is done by the end of May. I am too old to play in the level that I was last year. I will go to high school this fall and I am hoping to be part of the football program.
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.

2008 RDSP deadline extended to March 2

The Honourable Jim Flaherty, Minister of Finance, and the Honourable Diane Finley, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, announced in late December that the deadline for opening an RDSP, making contributions and applying for the matching Grant and the income-tested Bond for the 2008 contribution year has been extended to March 2, 2009. The 2009 RDSP contribution year will begin March 3, 2009.

“The Government announced RDSPs in Budget 2007 to help parents and others set aside funds today to financially support a child with a severe disability when they are no longer able to provide support,” said Minister Flaherty. “I am very pleased that this long-term financial support is now available and I congratulate the Bank of Montreal for being the first major bank to offer RDSPs.” The Royal Bank of Canada will begin offering them in mid-February.

“To ensure that as many individuals as possible can establish an account and be eligible for a full year of the Canada Disability Savings Grant and the Canada Disability Savings Bond, we are pleased to announce a two month extension to the 2008 deadline for opening an RDSP and applying for the 2008 Grant and Bond,” Flaherty added.

“Families have been advocating and hoping that Alberta would exempt the RDSP so we could better ensure the future well-being of our sons and daughters with developmental disabilities,” said Wendy McDonald, AACL President and parent of a child with developmental disabilities. “It is wonderful that the Alberta government has so positively responded to the voice of families and individuals with disabilities.”

“On behalf of families from coast to coast, the Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network would like to thank the Government of Canada for its leadership in implementing an RDSP, the first of its kind in the world,” said Al Etmanski, President of PLAN. “With my daughter, Liz, I have been eagerly awaiting this announcement. Aside from ensuring the financial well-being of our sons and daughters, the Government of Canada is sending a major signal to Canadians with disabilities and their families: ‘we know you have extra expenses; we know you want to participate and contribute to society; we trust you to decide how best to do this.’”

Individuals who qualify for the disability tax credit, their families and others may save for the long-term financial security of a person with a severe disability by contributing to an RDSP. Matching Canada Disability Savings Grants from the Government of Canada may supplement these contributions. The Canada Disability Savings Bond is also available for low- and middle-income families even if no contributions are made.

The RDSP is a tax-assisted savings plan. Contributions to an RDSP will not be deductible, nor will they be included in income when withdrawn. Investment income, grants and bonds are included in the income of the beneficiary when withdrawn from an RDSP. To maximize the effectiveness of RDSP’s and ensure that payments from the plan supplement rather than reduce income and benefits from other sources, amounts paid out of RDSPs will not affect federal income-tested benefits and credits such as the Canada Child Tax Benefit, the Goods and Services Tax Credit or Old Age Security.

The Government of Canada has also worked with the provinces and territories to ensure that RDSPs are as effective as possible. To date, Newfoundland and Labrador, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia and the Yukon have announced that RDSP income and assets will not affect calculations for income support benefits. Quebec, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island have announced that RDSP payments will be exempt from income support reductions up to certain limits. The Northwest Territories announced a limited income exemption from social assistance, which will partially accommodate beneficiaries of RDSPs.

(Additional information on the grant and bond can be found on the Human Resources and Skills Development Canada website at: www.hrsdc.gc.ca/disability. For more information, contact AACL or visit Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network at www.plan.ca and see the RDSP.com link.)
Bike-enthusiast David Meisner looks out the window at the snowy Calgary landscape and calculates how long he must wait until he can get back in the saddle. He sighs and thinks of his blue Norco parked in the garage. David serves double duty as a bicycle patrol volunteer with both Fish Creek Provincial Park and the City of Calgary. An enthusiastic outdoorsman, David volunteers his time and pedal-power to cycle park paths, greet park users, report storm damage and vandalism and be a fresh set of eyes to protect and preserve Calgary’s parks and pathways.

“I miss riding my bike in winter,” David said recently with help from his mother Marg. “Sometimes I can ride when the sidewalks or streets are clear, but I don’t like to ride through the snow and ice.”

Fish Creek is the largest urban provincial park in North America. Looking after it involves not only staff but also a host of volunteers trained in the Park Watch Stewardship Program. Last summer under a fierce July sun, David and his support person Cam Buechert parked their bikes and sat down to describe what they do. Bonnie Castle-Dixon, then with Friends of Fish Creek, joined them at a picnic table near the interpretive centre.

“Park Watch,” David says with a small smile, demurely keeping his eyes on the tabletop. “Found a tree. On the path.” Cam concurs: “A branch had fallen, so Dave stopped and moved it off the pathway to make sure no one gets hurt.”

Park Watch involves a core of volunteers who patrol areas of Fish Creek to watch for things like storm damage. “In 2001, the number of conservation officers was cut back dramatically, so we arranged for volunteers to check out damage, graffiti, answer questions, and keep an eye on things,” explains Bonnie. “We started with 24 and now we have 72. The majority stay on and feel a real sense of giving something meaningful. Most volunteers do two two-hour shifts a month, but rain or shine Cam and David are here May to September, three hours every week. I don’t think David’s ever missed a shift. David is very active and the two of them cover a lot of territory.”

“We’ve helped people fix flat tires; we carry some extra parts for bike tires,” adds Cam. “We report damage, like fallen trees, and warn people if we see a bear or cougar or if there’s news of a sighting. We’re a presence here.”

That positive presence wasn’t always something associated with David, now 27. In school, he had been labeled “a severe behaviour problem” for whom inclusion in the community would never work. His mother Marg knew that wasn’t who David really was and it was her connection with AAACL that made her start thinking of a better life for him.

David was already a volunteer at Fish Creek. Because he needed support, he was accompanied by a staff from his day program at the time “When David left the program,” Marg explains, “we met Cam through Progressive Alternatives Society of Calgary and when I switched more of my funding to Family Managed Supports, I could pay Cam to continue.” For the past four years, Cam and David have been getting involved in community pursuits, including the park patrol work. Cam’s role is simple: help David create an interesting, active life and support him to be engaged with people as a regular member of the community. Because of David’s love of the outdoors, physical exercise and bicycles, the park patrol idea was a perfect fit.

“Cam has Devinci,” David

At Fish Creek, Cam and David check in with Bonnie Castle-Dixon.
I’ve seen changes in David since I met him. He’s talking more. We just started out with small things like greeting people, and the report forms are a tangible thing that helps with spelling, handwriting and comprehension,” explains approvingly. “Grey.”

“On a bike you can cover so much ground,” explains Cam. “We’ve been working on greeting people. It’s a bit different on a bike, but we acknowledge people with a ‘nice day’ or ‘good morning.’ Because we’re here often and we have a particular route, we tend to bump into the same people so it’s nice to have that social element, too.”

2009 will be David’s fifth year at Fish Creek. “They’re so familiar with the park that anything out of the ordinary gets reported,” says Bonnie. “They can provide a lot of information to people when they’re out doing their route. They are the ideal stewards. They fill in their regular reports, but if something is urgent, they come and tell me right away. David has been helping us do trail care, building a single track trail through the park for those who like to go off the paved pathways. David’s been out with a few friends with their shovels and rakes.”

In the City of Calgary, over 7,000 volunteers maintain parks and green space, playgrounds, pathways, trees, reservoirs, natural areas, dog off-leash areas and assist Parks staff to provide special community programs. Just last year, David joined up with the Volunteer Parks Ranger program. One aspect is the Pathways Bike Team, another good fit for bike-enthusiast David. The Bike Team has 16 volunteer cyclists who ride designated pathway routes with identifiable jackets, helmets, and t-shirts and provide information to park users, act as positive role models and report damage, safety concerns and vandalism. Darrell Howard, administrator, Volunteer/Special Events, Public Education and Program Services with City of Calgary Parks, says having a visible presence in a cadre of dedicated and trained volunteers ensures the parks are safe and well maintained.

“We focus on a positive message in the Ranger program,” she explains. “We let park users know about some of the rules like having dog on leash, ringing the bell when you pass, letting people pass on the paths. The volunteers are the eyes to see what’s going on, anything from graffiti to a pothole. We know that visibility is one of the things that really count, so when park users see the volunteer with the t-shirt, they know these guys have first aid kits, maps. They know they can get information.”

Howard says after meeting a year ago with David, Cam and Marg who shared photos of David’s many hikes with the Calgary Outdoor Club, she knew David would be a valuable ambassador. He was required to take the same 16 hours of CanBike training for urban cycling to ensure every volunteer has a base level of skills.

“David was quite shy at first,” remembers Howard, “but he’s a big bike fanatic, so pretty soon he was admiring people’s Konos bikes. Our instructor knew David from trail building in the Kananaskis and another person knew him from the Outdoor Club. It was a good community and with a little support, it was all very ordinary. One of the beauties of the program is that you can get out and have your recreation time, get some exercise and also contribute.”

Supporting David to use his skills and enjoy himself helps others see him as someone with similar passions and interests, not only as someone with a disability. Learning to ride a bike as a youngster has proven to be a skill that has provided not only hours of enjoyment, but is a magnet for others.

“When Dave’s on his bike, it’s just something that really resonates with him and people really appreciate that,” says Cam. “Being involved with like-minded people who enjoy the outdoors not only educates park users about the...”
Circles of Support with Jayne Barrett

A circle of support, sometimes called a circle of friends, is a group of people who meet together on a regular basis to help somebody, such as a person with developmental disabilities or their families, accomplish their personal goals in life. The circle acts as a community around that person who, for one reason or another, is unable to achieve what they want in life on their own and decides to ask others for help. The members of the circle, who may include family, friends and other community members, are not paid to be there. They are involved because they care enough about the person to give their time and energy to helping that person to overcome obstacles and increase the options that are open to them. The members will all have diverse gifts and interests, and there can appear many new opportunities and possibilities, which had not even been considered before the forming of the circle. Circles are about seeing people as individuals and supporting them and their families to have access to the good things in life.

Jayne Barrett has been a long-time advocate for families who have sons or daughters with developmental disabilities. As a parent she was involved in initiating many community-based services in the southern areas of Adelaide, South Australia during the 1980’s. Jayne has had a long-term involvement as a member of both the South Australian Social Role Valorization (SRV) network as well as the Australian & New Zealand SRV Group, which work to ensure that sound, values based training is available, to those wishing to serve people with disabilities and others well.

Workshops with Jayne Barrett will be held in Edmonton February 23 and in Calgary February 24. To register for Edmonton, contact: Barb Coble, AACL, ph: 780.451.3055 or 1.88.252.3556; email: mail@aacl.org. To register for Calgary, contact: Allison Pilon, Family Voices-Calgary, ph: 403.717.0361; email: apilon@aacl.org. Register by Feb. 15; online at www.aacl.org. For more information on Jayne Barrett: http://www.clp-sa.org.au.

Now is the Time for Vision, a one-day workshop with Darcy Elks, was hosted by Family Voices Northwest to help family members with developmental disabilities to have a full, meaningful, and inclusive lifestyle. The workshop, held at the Grande Prairie Regional College, was also offered via video-conference to participants in Slave Lake, High Level and Peace River. Aimee Steinke, Community Development Advocate with Family Voices Northwest said it was the first time videoconferencing was used. “I felt it was a great way to have people talk and see a presenter who otherwise may not be able to attend because of the distance.” On January 21st, the workshop was also presented in Cochrane, hosted by the Family Voices–Calgary and Darcy met with families at AACL’s Leadership series on the weekend.

(Composite of photos by Melynda Crampton)
park, but also educates them about the contributions that people with disabilities can make. It’s a way of giving back, too, and David can be a contributing person instead of being seen as a recipient, the traditional way people with disabilities have been viewed.”

Darrell agrees that David is first a member of the Ranger group and “good value” since not only does he contribute, but so does Cam and also Marg, who volunteers in different aspects of the both Fish Creek and the City programs. “Meeting all the other members of the bike team was pretty low key. Nobody made a big deal that David has a disability,” says Darrell. “The role modeling that has happened teaches everyone else that they don’t have to see David in a different way. He’s just one of the team.”

Cam has since taken on another job. While they get together when they can, David has begun to meet with Aaron, a Calgary firefighter Marg hired. “Perhaps in the future enough people will know him well enough for him to participate without paid supports,” she says, “but we haven’t evolved to that yet.” While he waits for bike riding weather, David is doing Park Ranger work on foot, and he has introduced Aaron to the park program. “We get together when he has days off,” David explains. “I miss riding my bike the most, and meeting people we talk to in the parks. Not sure what kind of bike Aaron has.”

In the Reg Peters Library


From one of the trusted names in special education, the third edition of this bestselling resource gives K-12 teachers research-based, practical strategies for fully including students with cognitive impairments as well as sensory, behavioral, and physical disabilities. June Downing and a select group of expert contributors build on the previous editions, equipping educators and family members with everything they need to know about:

• Ensuring meaningful access to core content areas
• Teaching effectively in an age of accountability
• Measuring student progress toward set standards
• Easing transitions, both between grade levels and between school and adult life
• Writing measurable goals and objectives
• Encouraging peer-to-peer learning and support


Direct support work is of essential importance to the lives of people with developmental disabilities, and its practitioners should hold themselves responsible for mastering the relationship skills and ideas necessary to do it well. Good direct support makes an important difference in the lives of people with developmental disabilities and their families. These resources were written for direct support workers and for the people who manage or help direct support workers, hire and supervise their own staff, or agency managers, or service brokers. By reading the guidebook, using the leader’s manual and being part of a learning group you will improve your understanding and implementation of direct support.

(AAACL can mail these resources to anyone interested. They are available free of charge, although there are limited quantities. Visit www.aac.org and view the catalogue online and search items in the Reg Peters Library, a list of publications available for purchase, and a list of video titles and subjects. For more information, contact: Lisa Snyder, Library Technician, AAACL, 11724 Kingsway Ave, Edmonton, AB T5G 0X5, ph: 780.451.3055, #225; email: library@aacl.org.)
March 20–21, 2009: Attend two full days of presentations and workshops on a variety of topics including inclusive education, inclusive post-secondary education, navigating inclusive pathways into adult life, including children in recreation programs, family leadership and advocacy, international parent exchange, Family Voices and community capacity. Held at the Fantasyland Hotel at the West Edmonton Mall in Edmonton, Alberta, this is the longest running and largest family conference in Canada. Free child and youth programming is offered as well as a fun-filled and informative youth forum (ages 14–29). Celebrate on Saturday evening at the family dance.

Along with AACL families, individuals with developmental disabilities, volunteers, staff and community members, featured presenters include:

Dr. June Downing is Professor Emerita of Special Education, California State University, Northridge and prior to that was at the University of Arizona in Tucson, where she did research and prepared teachers to work in the area of moderate, severe, and multiple disabilities. She is a national leader in the field of special education that targets the needs of students with severe disabilities, especially with regard to inclusive education. June has published several articles, chapters, monographs, and six books on teaching students with severe and multiple disabilities. She served for six years on the Executive Board of TASH, an international advocacy organization for individuals with severe disabilities and was a past president of the California Chapter of TASH. She has served as an associate editor of Research and Practices for Persons with Severe Disabilities journal and currently serves on several other professional editorial boards. June is now an educational consultant, traveling extensively to provide training and workshops to teachers and others on effective inclusion for students with severe disabilities.

John O’Brien offers training and consultation internationally on creative ways to support people who have disabilities and make positive systems change. John learns about building more just and inclusive communities from people with disabilities, their families, and their allies. John has had extensive involvement in planning, providing, and evaluating human services for more than 30 years. He has written numerous articles and books and consulted and taught across the globe on individualized supports, service system change and person-centered planning. He is one of the recognized developers of citizen advocacy and person-centered approaches to individual and organizational planning. John has been a friend and mentor to AACL for many years.

To register: For registration information, grant applications, child & teen programming registration forms, session details and accommodation information, visit www.aacl.org; call AACL 780.451.3055 ext. 222; toll free in Alberta: 1.800.252.7556 ext. 222, or email: mail@aacl.org.