

Dialect

Newsmagazine of the Saskatchewan Association for Community Living



Fall/Winter
2007



Solemn silhouette

Members of the People First Freedom Tour stopped at the long unused cemetery near Valley View Centre in Moose Jaw to remember the people in Canada who left institutions only through death and to show support for those still living inside. Whitney Haddad, bottom left, Shelly Gopfrich, Megan Wells and Susie Weizsmann, centre, joined guitarist Richard McInnis. Neil Mercer, far right, who spent several years in Valley View, said the candlelight reflection was “a mixture of sadness and pleasure that people remember.” Mercer’s own sister smothered in a pillow during a seizure but was buried by her family at home. He did find the nameplates of three women he had known and “I felt bad that I’d forgotten about them.” See *Freedom Tour rolls*, page 4. (Photo by Sherilynn Gould)

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Annual General Meeting

June 6-8, 2008

Dialect

Winner
Bronze Media Award,
Canadian Association for Community Living
Memorial Award,
The Media Club of Canada
Certificates of Excellence for Outstanding Media,
U.S. Down Syndrome Congress

Our Mission

To ensure that those citizens of Saskatchewan who have intellectual disabilities are full, active and valued members of society and that they have worthwhile opportunities and choices in all aspects of daily life.

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Saskatchewan Association for Community Living 2007-2008

Show support for community living

As you know, deinstitutionalization is a priority issue for SACL as we believe that all individuals with intellectual disabilities have the right to community living. As an organization we are continuing to advocate for adequate, appropriate and respectful supports and services to be developed and funded by our provincial government so that everyone can live in the community with the supports they require. SACL is also an active member of the People First Canada/CACL Joint Task Force on Deinstitutionalization. The Task Force has created a website to provide information and raise awareness of this issue, and has also prepared a Declaration of Support for Community Living (below) which is online and set up to collect signatures. I would encourage all to visit the link below, read the declaration and consider signing on in support of our efforts both provincially and nationally.

Laurie Larson, Biggar
President, SACL

In Canada today, many thousands of Canadians with intellectual disabilities remain trapped in large segregated institutions, inappropriately and unjustifiably segregated from society. They remain, for the most part, hidden and removed from the mainstream of society despite a collective knowledge, based on research and practice over the past 30 years, that with proper community-based supports all persons with intellectual disabilities thrive in the community. They remain in these institutions as a result of inaction by governments and communities. Therefore:

GIVEN that Canadians with intellectual disabilities are citizens and as such have equal rights to full inclusion and life in the community; are valued contributing members of our society; and are entitled, regardless of the severity of their disability, to community living;

AFFIRMING that disability is a natural part of human diversity and that persons with intellectual disabilities, as other human beings, are entitled to basic human rights and fundamental freedoms as embedded in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and other national and international laws, conventions and standards;

DEFINING an institution as any place in which people with an intellectual disability are isolated, segregated and/or congregated; any place in which people do not have, or are not allowed to exercise, control over their lives and their day to day decisions;

RECOGNIZING that institutions deny citizenship and life in the community;

KNOWING that institutions do not and cannot contribute to the health and well being of persons with intellectual disabilities;

ACKNOWLEDGING the abuses that have been (and continue to be) committed against persons with intellectual disabilities within these institutions;

CONCERNED that persons with intellectual disabilities are still being admitted to institutions rather than being supported to live dignified lives in the community;

SADDENED by the stories told by persons who have spent years in these institutions;

OUTRAGED by the fact that these institutions still exist despite the availability of other more appropriate community based alternatives;

UNITED in a vision of a truly inclusion Canada, based on the values of Freedom, Choice and Equality;

WE, INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLECTIVELY, commit to working together to assist persons to return to their communities and call on all levels of government in this country to:

- Acknowledge that institutions for persons with intellectual disabilities have no place in today's society;
- Stop financing or otherwise supporting the

establishment of new institutions for persons with intellectual disabilities;

- Stop all new admissions to existing institutions;
- Support the right of all people with disabilities to live in the community as equal citizens;
- Commit the necessary resources to support the development of quality, comprehensive community-based alternatives to institutional care;
- Acknowledge the wrongs that have been committed against those individuals who have been held for far too long in institutions across this country.

To sign this declaration, visit: www.institutionwatch.ca.

The Registered Disability Savings Plan explained

By James M. Flaherty

Canada's New Government recognizes the special challenges faced by parents caring for a child with a severe disability. An important consideration for these families is how best to ensure that child's financial security when they are no longer able to provide support. *Budget 2006* announced that we would establish a small group of experts to examine the issue and provide their advice. In July 2006, I appointed the Expert Panel on Financial Security for Children with Severe Disabilities. The Panel submitted its report, *A New Beginning*, in December 2006.

In *Budget 2007*, we acted on the recommendations of the Panel by announcing the introduction of the new Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP). RDSPs will be available commencing in 2008 and will be based generally on the existing Registered Education Savings Plan design. An individual eligible for the Disability Tax Credit (DTC), his or her parent or other legal representative will be allowed to establish a RDSP. The DTC-eligible individual will be the plan beneficiary. The RDSP will consist of three main elements:

- Parents, beneficiaries and others wishing to save will be able to contribute to a RDSP. Contributions to a RDSP for a beneficiary will be limited to a lifetime maximum of \$200,000. Contributions will be permitted up until the end of the year in which a beneficiary attains 59 years of age.

- Annual RDSP contributions will attract Canada Disability Savings Grants (CDSGs) at matching rates that depend on family income and the amount contributed, up to a maximum lifetime CDSG limit of \$70,000. Where family net income does not exceed \$74,357, the matching rate on the first \$500 of contributions will be 300 percent, and the matching rate on the next \$1,000 of contributions will be 200 percent. Where family net income exceeds \$74,357, the matching rate on the first \$1,000 of contributions will be 100 percent. These income thresholds are for the 2007 taxation year and will be indexed to inflation for 2008, when RDSPs become operational, and for subsequent taxation years. A RDSP will be eligible to receive CDSGs up until the end of the year in which the plan beneficiary attains 49 years of age.
- Canada Disability Savings Bonds (CDSBs) of up to \$1,000 per year will be provided to RDSPs established by low- and modest-income families, up to a maximum lifetime CDSB limit of \$20,000, and will not be contingent on contributions. The maximum annual \$1,000 CDSB will be paid to a RDSP where family net income does not exceed \$20,883. The CDSB will be phased out gradually for those with family net income between \$20,883 and \$37,178. These income thresholds are for the 2007 taxation year and will be indexed to inflation for 2008, when

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“You have to do something” – Freedom Tour rolls through Saskatchewan

After two years of planning, a small convoy of five determined self-advocate filmmakers with the help of a media crew, along with members of People First of Canada, advisors and friends, traveled from Winnipeg to Calgary to raise awareness about people who still remain in institutions, to collect and share stories and film this journey for a documentary called *The Freedom Tour*. Stops along the way included Portage La Prairie, Dauphin, Regina, Moose Jaw, Saskatoon, Edmonton and Red Deer. Kevin Johnson of Winnipeg spoke at a gathering in Saskatoon. It's not enough to just be upset by the fact that many people with disabilities aren't being supported to live full lives. People have to do something, he said.

“It's very distraughting but if you don't talk about it, people won't know about it. I think people should be out of institutions and have supports they need and money,” said Johnson. “I think people can live in the community and we're tired of government bureaucracies telling us you're this, you're that. I think my government in Manitoba has failed us, not the other way around.”

The Free Our People Project was born as self-advocates and allies gathered at the Manitoba Legislature in February 2005 to raise awareness about the government's decision to put \$40 million into the Manitoba Developmental Centre (MDC), an institution where nearly 400 people are kept. Josée Boulanger, a local filmmaker, was in the crowd at the Legislature and she interviewed self-advocates from across Canada. Moved by their “strong opinions and important stories,” she wound up suggesting a collaborative documentary in which self-advocates would not only tell their own stories but also work as fledgling filmmakers. The video documentary and the People First Freedom Tour has received funding by People First of Canada. Research and development for the Free Our People Project has received funding from the National Film Board of Canada.

Shane Haddad of Regina is the president of People First of Canada and is the second vice-president of the SACL.

He says it's important to make the public understand it's not just about closing institutions. That would be easy, he says. The necessary part of the process is what happens to people in the community.

“It's important the government and people in Saskatchewan and other provinces invest in deinstitutionalization because a home is so much more than Valley View and big institutions like that,” says Haddad. “We don't want people in an institution outside of town on a hill, but community oriented, supported to live a better life. Dumping people, that's not what we mean at all.”

David Weremy of Winnipeg lived for 18 years in MDC.

He is featured in the documentary with his brother Terry who recalls how families were never allowed to see where their family member lived. David's sister Maggie has difficulty coming to grips with David's lived experience in the institution, certain that it can't be as bad now “because we know better.” David insists nothing has changed.

“I live in Portage, that's the worst place for living for 18 years. I run away nine times, the ninth time that was it,” says Weremy, who now lives on his own in the city. “My brother Terry, he's in video and my sister Maggie. She believe me now. It still the same. Nothing change, nothing! Nobody knows. They won't allow them [to come out]. They forget about them, my friends in there.”

Diane Otterbein is a parent of a young man with a disability and has supported People First members in Saskatchewan. She looks forward to seeing the final documentary.

“I'm very sensitive about tokenism and the accusations by service providers that people with disabilities are just being used to get the political message across. I think it's so valuable that each of the people in the video tell their own unique story in their words, their way. It's their message and they're saying it in a really uninhibited way. The self-advocate voice is the one people need to hear.”



Members of the People First Freedom Tour gather to commemorate one of their whistle stops in Saskatchewan this summer. The tour, designed to make prairie Canadians aware of people living in institutions, began in Winnipeg and wound its way across Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta before ending in Calgary.

Richard Ruston of Windsor, Ontario, is a member of the Freedom Tour. He's a member of People First of Canada and is also co-chair of the joint People First/CACL Task Force on Deinstitutionalization. He says the tour should continue beyond just Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta.

"I would like this tour to visit the rest of the provinces and there are people with disabilities put in big nursing homes because they can't get the help to live in their own places," says Ruston. "I think there are still psychologists and doctors who keep saying 'that's the best place for them and they gotta go there. They'll be taken care of for the rest of their lives.' Like David's sister, she wanted to think it was a good place even when David was trying to tell her it wasn't. I hear it all the time that people think we have intellectual disabilities so we're just making it up, we don't know. We do know. There's been a lot of stigmatism because of labels and kids have to grow up believing they can do things and it all starts when they're growing up."

Kevin Johnson added, "[So far] we've learned a lot about each other, we know that sometimes people with disabilities aren't the easiest to get along with, but on the other hand, our advisors sometimes aren't the easiest either. We've seen what the struggles are for people with intellectual disabilities, we strongly believe as People First of Canada that people should not be in institutions. They should be out in the community with good supports. We've had vigils at -20 in Winnipeg, we had a protest in May in Regina at the Legislature and it was windy and blustery but it didn't matter. You just have to do it."

The members of the Free Our People Project include Valerie Wolbert, David Weremy, Kevin Johnson, Susie Weizsmann and Mark Blanchette, all of Winnipeg. Visit [www: freeourpeople.ca](http://www.freeourpeople.ca).



The SACL Board of Directors 2007-2008 with President Laurie Larson, centre, fourth from the right. (Photo by Dionne Miazdyck-Shield)

Freedom Tour makes stop at old Valley View cemetery

"It was a real mixture of sadness and pleasure to be there and that people remember," said Neil Mercer, a former resident of Valley View Centre for eight years. Mercer has been a member of People First at the local, provincial and national levels over many years. "I was glad that my old friends from Valley View who live in the community now, Billy Hogarth and Don Thibeault, were there. We lit some candles and it was just nice to go out there and remember people."

"I think the cemetery should be registered," said Shane Haddad, president of People First of Canada and SACL second vice-president. "The Moose Jaw newspaper said it wasn't and it should be. Those people buried there are just as important as anyone else buried anywhere in the province."

John Cox of Nova Scotia, a member of People First of Canada, said the grass had been cut and small gravemarkers could be seen, but he felt sad for the people whose move out of Valley View Centre just meant a burial in the cemetery.

"It was very somber at the cemetery. There were small little stones in the grass. We had a hard time finding the cemetery because it's way out away from the institution on a long dirt road. There was a small angel, grave markers with a little plaque. I read some of the dates and I read 1955, 1956, 1962. Someone said they buried the last person there in 1972."

People First of Saskatchewan president Tracy Ward made some opening remarks to the small gathering and music was played while candles were lit. Mercer, who asked if he could say a short prayer at the cemetery, said the lights of Valley View Centre could be seen in the distance. While his own sister who died in Valley View was taken home to Turtleford to be buried, his cousin is buried somewhere on the site though Mercer couldn't find his marker. "My auntie didn't want him to come home even after he died, so he's still there somewhere."

Ask Us

In this ongoing column, a question received from a parent, family member or person with an intellectual disability is featured in each Dialect issue. The response is provided by Faith Bodnar, SACL Executive Director; some responses may come from any number of sources depending on the nature of the question. Provide your name, contact information and whether you are willing to let your question be published. Send to the Dialect, editor, c/o SACL, 3031 Louise Street, Saskatoon, SK, S7J 3L1; fax (306) 373-3070, or email: Karin.schwier@mac.com. For this issue, we discuss the ways SACL provides support to individuals, their families and others. "Can you help me?" came as a surprise to Bodnar; the question from a long-time SACL volunteer parent. "I think we have to constantly remind ourselves that people go about the business of their lives, caring for and supporting a family member with a disability. When I hear 'I didn't know you do that,' it tells me we need help people in Saskatchewan understand what we can offer for them."

Quite simply, advocacy means active support to assist someone in need. Wider-reaching organizational advocacy makes systems, governments and society better for people with intellectual disabilities and their families. The Association's advocacy team provides support to individuals with an intellectual disability, parents, siblings, family members, friends, employers, educators, health providers, and various other government and community organizations. This wide range of work is grounded in the foundation of human rights, community living, inclusion and belonging. In the past year, the SACL's advocacy team, its employment counselors, other staff and volunteers advocated for and with people who have an intellectual disability, their families and others in situations like these—many of which are ongoing, just to describe a few:

- Appealed to Income Security regarding the right to keep quality of life assets while receiving payments.
- Appealed decisions for homecare and individualized funding from Regional Health Authorities.
- Designed new residential and vocational options with parents for sons and daughters currently living at home.
- Supported people with intellectual disabilities and mental health issues to get better acute and community-based care from Mental Health Services.



Faith Bodnar

- Participated as team members and team leaders to assist parents and individuals apply for Cognitive Disability Strategy benefits.
- Helped individuals and families apply for the government's Community Living Division services as well as individualized and family support funding contracts.
- Supported people involved in the criminal justice system by working with Legal Aid, private practice lawyers, Corrections and Public Safety and various institutions and penitentiaries.
- Provided information and resources to students, volunteers, families, educators and others interested in issues about intellectual disability.
- Created various resources and guidebooks on issues to inform individuals and families.
- Ensured parents involved with Child Protection and Legal Aid understand their rights and responsibilities.
- Worked with other disability groups to modify intake guidelines of the Saskatchewan Rental Housing Supplement to include people with intellectual disabilities.
- Responded to and worked with individuals who asked to move or choose a different living and/or working environment to be sure they were supported in this decision.
- Worked with families asking for help to design and arrange for funding to create a son or daughter's own home and individualized vocational/day program.
- Planned and delivered an innovative community-based companionship program with adequate funding for sons and daughters of working parents, aged 13 to 22, who require before and after school care.
- Provided Level 1 Training, Basic Standards Reviews, facilitated Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATHs) and McGill Action Planning Strategy (MAPS) sessions at the invitation of individuals and families.

- Worked with families who ask for support in assistance so their family member with a disability can remain in their home rather than being institutionalized.
- Provided practicum placements for SIAST's Rehabilitation Worker Program, Library Science, and the University of Regina's Social Work Program.
- Prepared and presented position papers and briefs on a host of issues to various levels of government and other community organizations.
- Accompanied individuals and family members to various meetings and appointments.
- Planned and delivered Complex Needs Forums with the Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres and Community Living Division.
- Responded to requests from families concerned with the support and level of care a family member was receiving in their current living and/or working environment.
- Supported individuals—or whose families— have reported abuse, exploitation or neglect.
- Matched parents in mentorship role so that knowledge and experience can be shared with new parents.
- Supported high school students and their families to make the transition into adulthood in a way that respects their unique dreams and goals.
- Matched families with Members of Parliament and Members of the Legislative Assembly so politicians could better understand the life experience of people with disabilities.
- Worked with the Community-University Institute for Social Research to analyze the costs and benefits of individualized funding arrangements compared to traditional block-funded services.
- Worked with SIAST and community colleges to create and support work readiness programs so adult learners with disabilities can continue with a post-secondary education.
- Nurtured partnerships in Saskatchewan with organizations and businesses to create more welcoming and supportive work environments for people with disabilities who want jobs.
- Arranged workshops for siblings, parent retreats and gatherings for families around the province.

If you, or someone you know, have questions or needs some support, contact the SACL. Call (306) 955-3344 so we can make sure you get the help you need in your community.

Savings Plan... continued from page 3

RDSPs become operational, and for subsequent taxation years. A RDSP will be eligible to receive CDSBs up until the end of the year in which the plan beneficiary attains 49 years of age.

Contributions to a RDSP will not be deductible and will not be included in income when paid out of a RDSP. The investment income earned in the RDSP will accumulate tax-free. CDSGs, CDSBs and investment income earned in the RDSP will be included in the beneficiary's income for tax purposes when paid out of a RDSP. Only the RDSP beneficiary, or the beneficiary's legal representative, will be permitted to receive payments from a RDSP. Payments from a RDSP will be required to commence by the end of the year in which the beneficiary attains 60 years of age. To ensure that RDSP payments do not reduce federal income-tested benefits, amounts paid out of a RDSP will not be taken into account for the purpose of calculating income-tested benefits delivered through the income tax system, such as the Canada Child Tax Benefit and the Goods and Services Tax Credit. In addition, amounts paid out of a RDSP will not reduce Old Age Security or Employment Insurance benefits.

The provinces and territories provide income support for persons with disabilities through means-tested programs. The Expert Panel noted that, for the RDSP program to be effective, RDSP assets should not disqualify a plan beneficiary from receiving provincial or territorial income support provided to persons with disabilities. The Expert Panel also noted that payments from the plan should supplement – not reduce – income support provided under these programs at least until the level of income support plus RDSP payments exceeds the Low Income Cut Off for the province or territory.

RDSPs will help provide a brighter future for children with severe disabilities and give parents greater peace of mind in planning for that future. The Minister of Human Resources and Social Development and I will work with the provinces and territories to ensure that the RDSP is an effective savings vehicle to improve the financial security and well being of children with severe disabilities.

(This correspondence was received from the Minister of Finance James M. Flaherty by the Dialect editor in response to questions asked of her Member of Parliament Brad Trost.)

Noteworthy

RDACL-PLAN has received a very generous donation from parent Donalda Jones' sister Patricia LaBorde of Athena Resources. The \$2,500 per month "will really allow us to pursue our dreams for PLAN," says Faith Savarese, RDACL Executive Director.



Wanetta Laird

Wanetta Laird joins Cathy Deneiko as a **Cognitive Disability Consultant** with the Cognitive Disability Strategy, hosted by SACL. Laird has a Master of Education Degree in Educational Psychology and a Bachelor Degree with a Psychology major. Her professional background is in psycho-educational assessment and accommodation planning in school settings, as well as

residential services and vocational rehabilitation for individuals with disabilities. "I provide behavioral assessment and positive support planning with an individual and their team to respond to challenging behaviors," says Laird of her work with the CDS. "I work with teams to create community capacity by providing information, supporting community organizations and individual support teams. This may involve information

on the Strategy, supporting individuals with a cognitive disability, or assisting teams to access resources to assist with unmet needs."

The **Saskatchewan Family Network** is holding parent retreats beginning January 26-27, 2008. Dates set are also February 15-16, March 14-16, and April 5-6. To register on-line, visit www.sacl.org and click on Saskatchewan Family Network in the left menu or call Lynn Schaan, SFN coordinator, ph: (306) 955-3344. A sibling retreat is being planned for January; visit the site for details or call Lynn.

The Seattle Times reported recently that a medical doctor who was both criticized and praised for his involvement in a hysterectomy performed on a 6-year-old girl with disabilities in order to keep her small, dubbed the **Ashley Treatment**, committed suicide. The King County Medical Examiner said Dr. Daniel F. Gunther inhaled car exhaust and died September 30. In 2004, Gunther and Children's Hospital performed a series of surgeries on a child in order to keep her small. The girl's parents said if Ashley, their 'Pillow Angel,' grew larger she would be more difficult to care for. *Times* reporter Brian Alexander reported that Children's Hospital and Gunther initially defended the decision but earlier this year, they said they had made a mistake and the treatment was illegal. The hospital said

Regina group cultivates their art

By Cliff Eisler

At the RDACL we found a quote by Voltaire, "We must cultivate our Garden," and I liked the idea of a garden growing, full of life and surprises. Flowers were chosen because they have such variation. They are all unique in their beauty, but beautiful still. The sun was included because of the notion that the sun doesn't choose on whom it will shine. It shines on us all, regardless of who we are. The sun gives its warmth equally and without reserve. I wanted the style to be slightly reminiscent of the late 60's and early 70's, especially Peter Max. That era always brings to mind the hopeful ideals of peace, love and equality, ideals which are evergreen. The RDACL bought supplies with the help of the United Way, and we set out to complete the project in June. I worked with several others, some

with intellectual disabilities and their families and the mural was completed in a couple of weeks. We've had a number of positive responses from people in the neighbourhood. I hope that the image is peaceful and joyful. I hope that on the coldest January morning it gives someone belief in spring, and I hope that people feel good looking at it. The painters were John Robinson, Mark Robinson, Kara-Lee Vossen, Herman Vossen, Margaret Forgay, Katrina Bryant, Sheila Barnes, Isabella Wishlow and Maren Knopf.

(Eisler is the marketing and communications staff with the Regina & District ACL. He has worked as a graphic/commercial artist. The mural can be enjoyed on the corner of 14th and Lorne Street in Regina.)



they would have needed a court order to perform the surgery legally. In 2006, Gunther and another doctor wrote an article for the medical journal *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine* advocating the treatment for some cases. The article was titled "Attenuating Growth in Children With Profound Developmental Disability. A New Approach to an Old Dilemma."



Megan Wells

Megan Wells will head up **Kids on the Block** and the **Fusion Inclusion** youth program at SACL "I started out as a summer student, assisting my predecessor, Christine Flynn-James, in puppet shows and youth events. I had so much fun that I jumped at the chance to take it on while Christine is on her maternity leave for a year. I'm looking forward to a great term filled with puppets, new friends, good times and of course inclusion!"



Erin Baier and Krista Giefer are Employment Opportunities counselors in Kindersley.

James Sanheim, the provincial coordinator of **Employment Opportunities**, announces a few changes to the face of EO around the province. **Erin Baier** is the new Employment Consultant in **Kindersley**, an office that opened this spring and



Janice Henry

joins **Krista Giefer** there. **Janice Henry** is the new EO consultant in **Prince Albert**. "I've been working with individuals/families for approximately 20 years in the human services sector," says Janice. "I enjoy working with people and I'm committed to community empowerment. I am thrilled to be part of the SACL team and look forward to working together at providing support and resources to

intellectually disabled individuals/families/the community." Over the summer, SACL welcomed Amanda Gibson as an Employment Consultant Assistant. "Amanda was a welcome resource to assist with the popular Student Employment Experience program," says Sanheim, also an EO Consultant in Regina. He notes that additional EO staff includes Sheila Anderson in Saskatoon working in the central area and Jeannine Harlton, the EO consultant with the Rotary and 7-11 Partnerships. To contact any of the EO consultants, visit www.sacl.org, click on Employment

or call Provincial Coordinator James Sanheim (306) 790-5685. In other staff developments, **MaryBeth Gendron**, the former Employment Consultant based in the Prince Albert office, took over as SACL Advocate for the northern area as of November 1. Most recently, **Lynne Harley** took on position of Self-Advocacy Action Group Facilitator. She brings experience in group facilitation, program planning and working with people with intellectual disabilities. **Erin Lengyel** is an Administration Assistant and **Shannon Davies** is now on maternity leave. To contact SACL staff, visit www.sacl.org and click on Contact Us.



Shane Haddad of Regina was chosen by his peers to receive the Council of Canadians with Disabilities Award for his "continuous dedication and work in raising awareness within the disability movement." (Photo by Catherine Allix)

Best Buddies was launched at the University of Saskatchewan this fall. Best Buddies is a national volunteer program that pairs university students with people in the community who have intellectual disabilities. Through regular contact and social events, Best Buddies strives to foster friendship, understanding, and to enrich the lives of all parties involved. Best Buddies is sure to offer volunteers the opportunity to develop skills in mentorship, leadership, and communication, as well as offer a fun, exciting way for students to have a positive impact on their community. Campus Coordinator Kimberly Hsu wants to hear from potential buddies, email: kkh002@mail.usask.ca. The SACL is a partner with the U of S Best Buddies program, which joins the University of Regina as members of Best Buddies Canada. Call Carol Glazer, SACL Program Coordinator, at (306) 955-3344.

The **FASD Support Network of Saskatchewan** is implementing an Employment Pilot Project in Saskatoon. An Employment Support Coordinator will provide employment support to individuals diagnosed or suspected of being affected by an FASD. An eligible participant is an individual who identifies as having a permanent disability that restricts ability to perform daily activities; is unemployed and legally entitled to work in Canada; requires assistance to prepare for, obtain and keep employment or self employment; and is not eligible for assistance under EI benefits. For more information or to make a referral to this project please contact: Megan Wood, FASD Support Network of Saskatchewan Inc., ph: (306) 975-0806; toll free: 1 (866) 673-3276

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Government's Disability Inclusion Policy 'falls short' of addressing individual, family needs

The Disability Inclusion Policy Framework that was recently introduced by the Government of Saskatchewan has prompted mixed emotions in the members of the SACL. While we agree with the vision and principles of the framework, we offer an analysis of how the framework falls short of addressing the issues that remain for people with intellectual disabilities and their families.

Definition of Disability SACL applauds the government on their recognition of disability as a natural part of the human condition, the focus on self-determination and interdependence and the promise of reorganizing services to look at the impact of disability. However, the impact of disability is both individual and collective. The greatest impact of disability is life-long poverty. SACL agrees that disability is a natural part of the human condition, and therefore, people with disabilities should not be forced to live in poverty simply because they are different. With the movement towards impact of disability as the basis for eligibility criteria, SACL would welcome the removal of the IQ criteria for Community Living Division services. IQ testing is an outdated, inarticulate and artificial tool that was developed as a way to keep individuals out of the community.

Inclusion in Policy Development In the list of principles, the framework acknowledges that: "People with disabilities, their families and their support networks should be engaged in the development of policies and services that affect them" and that "People with disabilities, their families and their support networks should have opportunities to take an active role in developing the support systems that serve them." We agree, but even the development of this policy framework was done without consulting consumers, families and their supporters, demonstrating that true collaboration is not a priority. The Saskatchewan Council on Disability Issues, in its role as an advisory body, is not consultative, nor are they empowered to represent the lived concerns of people with disabilities and their families. A disability lens must continue to come from grassroots consultations.

The 2001 Disability Action Plan was created collaboratively with the disability community and we must return to this type of open, inclusive, mutual conversation when discussing the future of disability policy. SACL members and their families know what supports they need to build inclusive lives, they just need to have the opportunity to tell their stories.

Focus on Life Outcomes Currently the life outcomes for people with intellectual disabilities are marked by prescribed services, a lack of choice in or individualization

of supports and lifelong poverty. For many who remain institutionalized, their very basic human rights are being denied. Neither the Disability Action Plan, nor the Disability Inclusion Policy Framework, even refer to those individuals who remain in institutions like Valley View Centre, effectively ignoring their existence and plight. They are left behind and have no way of participating in or benefiting from any opportunities in the community. By overlooking these issues, the framework becomes rhetoric, a good philosophy without any substantive plan of action. A "focus on life outcomes" that the framework promotes would require a deliberate, realistic discussion of the real life situations of people with disabilities and their families and proactive supports that meet real needs.

Person-Centred Service Delivery Individualized funding is one way in which life outcomes for people with intellectual disabilities would be improved. The framework suggests that person-centred service delivery will become the basis to organize service systems, with individuals and families defining their own needs,

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Ministerial procession: Roger Lareau of Regina poses with Minister Carol Skelton and his mother Lill at a media conference about the Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP) earlier this year. Skelton, who served as the Member of Parliament for Saskatoon-Rosetown-Biggar, was the Minister of National Revenue, Minister Responsible for Western Economic Diversification and Regional Minister for Saskatchewan. She did not seek re-election, but Faith Savarese, Regina and District ACL Executive Director, said it was "a good opportunity to highlight the consultation between government and organizations like PLAN that led to the RDSP. The government was extremely responsive to what families wanted."

New premier's adoptive family says Wall 'down to earth'

Phyllis Lenuik of Swift Current is pretty happy that her MLA and Leader of the Opposition, Brad Wall of the Sask Party, just became Saskatchewan's 14th premier. The Lenuik family and Wall were matched in the SACL's Adopt-an-MLA campaign and she says he's "aware of a lot of issues" concerning people with disabilities.

Lenuik has five children; daughter Artell, 21, has a disability. When Wall visited her home, they discussed the shortage of respite support, issues around inclusive education and ways in which her daughter and other

students with disabilities are treated differently.

"Having him come into my home was relaxing and non-threatening," says Lenuik. "It was good, especially when you have five children, to not to have to go out to a meeting. We gathered around the table, like our own little Parliament. My other daughter was discussing politics with him. The kids were all over him. They had lots of questions and concerns. He has a nephew who has William's syndrome so he was in the know about some things. Mostly he just listened."



Brad Wall, Saskatchewan's 14th premier, met with SACL representatives earlier this year at a briefing on issues of concern to the Association. Ken Krawetz, deputy leader of the Sask Party (left), also met with SACL's Grassroots Alliance Judy Hannah, President Laurie Larson and Executive Director Faith Bodnar.

Portable, individualized funding key to life of choice, opportunity

Being able to make choices and manage our lives because of our purchasing power is so common place for most people that it's just an expectation. We choose how to spend our money based on choices we make about lifestyle, our own needs and those of our family, future plans and evolving goals. But this way of life isn't common; in fact, it's an exception for people with intellectual disabilities. Most services and supports for adults with intellectual disabilities are primarily delivered in a block funding model to agencies operating congregated settings such as group homes and sheltered workshops. A very small number of people in Saskatchewan are supported differently and successfully and the SACL believes these few set a precedent for a move to make Individualized Funding (IF) and Individually Funded Services (IFS) true options for everyone.

"I've seen first hand how people's lives and well being are enhanced when they are given the opportunity to make decisions regarding the services they receive," says Judy Hannah, SACL Grassroots Alliance Coordinator. "Although SACL is aware that some individuals are currently receiving IF here, there is currently no formalized process to access it from the Saskatchewan government. The unfortunate reality is that Saskatchewan is lagging behind other progressive countries and provinces when it comes to innovative ways to implement services for persons with disabilities."

Individualized Funding is a way some governments provide financial support to people with intellectual disabilities. Under Individualized Funding, a person-centered plan is developed for the individual and reflects their needs

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Things to think about:

Some people who have used IF say that they don't enjoy doing the paperwork and that it is sometimes difficult to hire people or find the right kind of services. SACL is prepared to administer the funding on behalf of the individual or their team and/or find another organization to do this.

Who might be interested in IF/IFS? People who want services that are different than what is currently provided or people who want specialized services or more personalized planning around supports and services.

Why should we support IF/IFS? IF and IFS may not be the right choice for everyone; however, people who have used it say that even when there are problems, IF is still better because it allows for flexible, personalized supports. IF and IFS need to be available as a choice for all individuals with intellectual disabilities.

What do we need to have in place to make sure IF works well in Saskatchewan? We need to make IF and IFS available as a real choice for people with intellectual disabilities and their families. There is a need for clear guidelines that reflect the right of choice and independence. It is critical that the people who will use IF be involved in the development of the Saskatchewan model, and that the resulting model is flexible, based on the needs of the individual, and transportable.

What can I do if I am interested in working on an IF or IFS plan for me or my adult son or daughter? You can call the SACL. We will answer your questions about IF and IFS. If you are interested in developing a plan, SACL will support you. SACL will also help you in determining who you should present your plan to for funding and will help you do it. A Guide is available from the SACL that gives you information on developing an IF/IFS proposal.

Power of Gentle Teaching lies in facing own humanity

By Faith Bodnar

SACL supports Gentle Teaching because it is consistent with our vision of citizenship, self-determination and full inclusion. We support it because it speaks to being in community, to being in relationship. Gentle Teaching removes and addresses, if we let it, the most significant barrier we have to overcome in our view of people with disabilities: *that people with disabilities cannot engage in and enrich relationships in the same way we do; that the presence of a cognitive disability means they do not feel the same, as much or as deeply as we who are not labelled do.* For me this is a last frontier in coming to terms with our society's pervasive failure to include and embrace diversity as it is reflected in people who have intellectual disabilities.

In many real ways, Gentle Teaching offers not so much hope for people with disabilities, but hope for the rest of us, and hope for society in that we can individually and collectively become more human. I have asked many times over the past few years, "What's the fuss all about anyway with Gentle Teaching?" We have played a small part in telling the story for four or five years now in Saskatchewan; seems like enough time. Certainly more than 25 years is enough if we look beyond our province. But still some say its not for everyone, it just won't work for him, it's not really a practical thing, it sets her up to be vulnerable and abused, it's not professional, it sounds good but how do we apply it, and how would we measure success for those we support.

Perhaps we are looking in the wrong direction when we think about success. Perhaps success starts with how we are doing, not the person we are supporting. Perhaps we need to recalibrate our measures of success. How about on a PPP or behaviour support plan we include a question or



Over 180 people from around the world attended.

two like, 'How have I changed? How have I grown? How has my behaviour improved?' I also hear people saying, "Well, I can use pieces of it, cobble together my own version and do a Gentle Teaching-like approach." I am always really skeptical and worried when I hear that word 'like' added to concept or process. I have heard of doing a "PATH-like" process or a "quasi-MAPS" or a "Supported Decision Making-like" process, and it really frightens me. My experience tells me that this really means the process or concept has lost its fundamental core, its essence. The values and principles, the truth and heart have been bastardized and, in fact, have become something very different and potentially harmful. Perhaps we do this when we have lost sight – perhaps we never really had it, or we do not really believe in the totality of the basic principles of equality and human rights as they apply to every single human being – no exceptions and as they are imbedded in these processes and in Gentle Teaching. Perhaps the struggle we have and fuss we make about Gentle Teaching reflects the struggle we have within ourselves.

I am absolutely no expert in Gentle Teaching, nor am I a psychologist, doctor, or other similarly learned person; in fact, my university degree is in urban studies and the social impacts of urbanization. But what I do know in my almost 30 years as a student and learner in community living is that Gentle Teaching speaks to me in a very personal and authentic way. I feel hopeful when I consider its principles. It touches that part of me that is love, that part of me that is the memory of love. I feel less afraid and more connected, more patient, more in community with others around me. I would be the last person to say blind faith is healthy. In fact I have built my life around what I consider a healthy and, I hope, a kind-hearted skepticism for some of what I see. Not a bitter chip or a tainted or sour outlook, but a healthy questioning skepticism. Many of us must work really hard at maintaining this healthy skepticism because we are brought into situations where people have been broken and abused in unimaginable ways.

When we catch ourselves doing the 'like' thinking, we must go back within ourselves to break down, examine, affirm and at times re-affirm where we come from. If we do this, then we will be able re-centre the fundamental beliefs and the basic truths of Gentle Teaching. We can understand our internal barriers and realize that some things don't need adapting. Some things are just true; our



SACL board member Jamie Ellis gives his impression of the conference to John McGee.

journey of self-awareness and openness to learning will get us to where we can deepen our understanding of our own truth and our own humanity. We deepen our appreciation of what was once unknown to us; the deep humanity and richness of people we are privileged to know through our work, in our lives and in our relationship with people with disabilities. We then transcend the false barriers and put into proper perspective the techniques and tools that have been designed not to change people's behaviour and external environments, but to create a better life.

What I am beginning to wonder is that perhaps the reasons we do not fully embrace Gentle Teaching are rooted in our fear of knowing ourselves. What Gentle Teaching offers is an opportunity to enrich our lives by reaching out to others in love, to help people remember and find the love that is within them, something we cannot do until we understand what we are really afraid of. Perhaps what Gentle Teaching offers, in addition to hope for people with disabilities, is hope for the rest of us. It is a hope for society that it may reach its full potential when it embraces diversity. The new Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, David Onley, recently said, "I would add that inclusion is needed to let a society reach its full potential. Enlightened self-interest should compel us toward greater inclusion." He goes on to say, "Even if we ourselves never had a disability, we can be selfishly motivated to make society accessible."

Onley continues by saying that skewing the pendulum in a completely new direction can be an antidote to the "same old same old." This brings me to what some refer to as a widely held belief that we must not encourage healthy intimacy or real connection or loving touch and other expressions of love with people with intellectual disabilities. It is somehow unprofessional and, worse, sets people with disabilities up to be taken advantage of and abused. It is important to lay this strong myth bare. Gentle Teaching does just that. I ask you to consider the logic of the following concern: *We must be careful not to show affection through touch to people with disabilities. We must keep them at a distance because it makes them vulnerable to abuse.* If we consider that love seeking, expressing love and connection with others are as urgent and necessary as food, shelter and water—that which sustains us and therefore human beings seek instinctively—then what happens if we deny it? My personal experience teaches me that I will seek love in ways that expose me to potential dangers, making me far more vulnerable than if I had respectful, reciprocal, healthy and appropriate connections with others. The reality is that far too many people with intellectual disabilities are and have been isolated and starved for real connection.

Being a true professional means making real connections and understanding the sacred relationship we are called to have with people with intellectual disabilities and



*Gentle Teaching founder John McGee
with Saskatchewan's Connie and Tim Jones.*

others in our lives. These are relationships that reflect our fundamental needs and desire to know each other and to be safe and cared for in these relationships. The essence of relationships is risk and vulnerability. We all struggle with this in our lives; would any of us choose to live without the struggle? No. Should we deny this risk for people with disabilities? We have no right to.

Truly living our values is difficult at a personal level, but doing so in the presence of detractors when our voices are not the majority or the loudest is a difficult thing. Coming together as Gentle Teachers and Learners also offers an amazing opportunity to support each other in our journey to spread the word and share stories. It provides space to support and, in some instances, console each other about being dismissed or isolated for saying that Gentle Teaching speaks truth to me and those in my life who have disabilities.

SACL is privileged to have been a part of the Gentle Teaching International conference this fall and to support Gentle Teaching in Saskatchewan. We are humbled to meet people from around the world. We are part of a ripple that spreads out, touches others, changes our communities, makes our society whole and mends its heart. Gentle Teaching makes us realize our full potential to share and gives us strength to venture out once again.

I have come to understand a little more about all this 'fuss.' I now know the fuss is well founded—for that while Gentle Teaching holds to a few simple yet profound truths, it requires me to confront and embrace my own humanity. By doing that, I see the beauty on the other side, the beauty that is people who have been dehumanized and devalued beyond comprehension, but who provide a window into my heart.

(Bodnar is the SACL executive director. She presented this at the GTI conference this fall.)

(Related item page 17.)

Parents can take advantage of new estate planning opportunities

By Terry McBride

New estate planning opportunities are becoming available to help parents provide long-term financial security for a child with a severe disability

Let's use an example. John and his wife, Mary, care for their... adult child [who has an intellectual disability], Robert, who is totally dependent on them for support. In his will John establishes a trust fund for Robert with Mary as trustee. Likewise Mary's will names John as trustee for Robert. Where do they find money to hold in the trust for Robert?

Life Insurance John and Mary can each buy life insurance. Cash benefits paid to the survivor can help pay for Robert's care. Then, after the second death, remaining money can be held in trust for Robert. Through appropriate wording of the will, the trustee may be given discretion to make payments for Robert in such a way that he is not disqualified from receiving provincial social assistance.

Tax-free RRSP rollover John and Mary each have an RRSP worth \$100,000. Currently John names Mary as beneficiary. The RRSP transfer to a spouse on death is tax-free. Mary can use RRSP savings she inherits from John to pay for Robert's care. Of course, because she inherits the RRSP, Mary would pay income tax on her withdrawals.

Income tax technical amendments allowing John to name the trust for Robert as an RRSP beneficiary were introduced in 2002 and modified in 2004. Therefore, John could designate that his RRSP funds be rolled tax-free into an annuity payable solely to Robert for the rest of his life. As trustee under the terms of John's will, Mary could hold the RRSP annuity for Robert. Assuming payments are \$4,600 per year, for example, the basic personal tax credit alone (\$8,929) should mean Robert pays no tax on his RRSP income.

Such RRSP income splitting can make it easier for Mary to support Robert after John's death. However, Robert may be eligible to receive social assistance from the province, which is subject to a means test. His social assistance benefits could be cut back dollar-for-dollar when he starts to receive the new RRSP annuity income.

Registered Disability Savings Plan The 2007 federal budget introduced a new Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP) to help Canadians like John and Mary save for the long-term financial security of their son, Robert.

The structure of an RDSP is like a Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP).

Starting in 2008, John and Mary can open an RDSP and save and invest tax-free. Investment income earned in the RDSP would become Robert's income for tax purposes when the RDSP withdrawals begin. Contributions to the RDSP will be eligible for the new Canada Disability Savings Grant (CDSG) because Robert is eligible for the disability tax credit (DTC). The government will contribute matching CDSG funds up to a maximum of \$3,500 per year depending on John and Mary's combined income. When family income is under \$74,357, the matching grant will be 300 per cent of the first dollars saved and 200 per cent on additional amounts. For higher income families the matching grant is simply 100 per cent. When John and Mary establish an RDSP for their disabled son, Robert, they can contribute a lifetime maximum of \$200,000, until the end of the year that Robert turns 59. CDSG matching grants will be available until the end of the year that Robert turns 49. Suppose Robert's parents contribute \$1,500 per year to the RDSP for 25 years. Assume 5.6 per cent annual investment returns. The RDSP can grow to \$170,000 -- enough to pay Robert an indexed lifetime payment of \$7,000 per year. The government says RDSP assets should not disqualify Robert from receiving provincial social assistance.

The attractive new CDSG matching grants should encourage parents like John and Mary to become proactive in their estate planning.

(Terry McBride is president of the local chapter of Advocis (The Financial Advisors Association of Canada). He works at Raymond James Ltd., a member of the Canadian Investor Protection Fund. Insurance and financial products and services are available through Raymond James Financial Planning Ltd., which is not a member of CIPIF. A recommendation of any strategy would only be made following a personal review of an individual situation. Seek independent advice for your tax-related questions. McBride writes a regular column for the Star Phoenix; this appeared in June 2007.)

The SACL appreciates the financial support for *Dialect* from:



Last January in response to a request for photos from the **Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD)**, SACL provided several pictures from the *Fifty Faces* competition. One was selected for use in a report on children's health in North America. Nancy Colborne Perkins with CCSD sent copies of the published report to SACL, the photographer, "and the family of these great faces. I loved all the photos you provided and will hope to find other places to use them," said Perkins. *Fifty Faces* was a photo competition designed to capture images illustrating inclusion and belonging; it was followed by a provincial tour.



Rod Goertzen, Program Head, Adult Basic Education at the Kelsey campus the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIASST), welcomed a new batch of 16 **Way**

to Work students during their orientation. The SACL partnered with WTW in 1996 to provide a post-secondary experience for adults who have intellectual disabilities who want employment. A similar Ready to Work Program partnered with SACL is offered at the community college in Biggar, also in partnership with the SACL. Sheila Anderson, an employment counselor with the Association, attended the orientation at Kelsey to remind students that the SACL offers employment support.



Rene of the SACL's Kids on the Block awareness troupe gets a grip on Lana Bueckert, Senior Business Advisor with the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce. Buecker presented Rene and SACL Executive Director Faith Bodnar, right, with a \$5,000 donation in support of the educational program. The Kids, along with their puppeteers, go into schools, summer camps, churches and other venues to encourage children to ask questions and learn more about people with disabilities. The SACL has operated the Kids program since the early 1980s.

Remembering Francis

By Steve Halabura

For three or so years, coffee with Francis Schaan was a mid-week tradition. We would meet in the afternoon at the Zellers in Market Mall, sometimes with our friend Robert Sanche, sometimes just us. We would meet for 30 to 45 minutes, and I would be his scribe.



SACL volunteer Francis Schaan, 48, died this spring after a brief illness. He was an active and steadfast volunteer in a variety of ways with the SACL for many years. His late father Tony and mother Magdalena were the founders of the Centennial branch of the SACL. (Photo by Karin Melberg Schwier)

After we were served our Pepsi, tea and coffee, Francis would ask me to "write this down," meaning that he wanted to work out his ideas. His ideas were constant and current, with me being part sounding board, part taker of dictation. The heart of his philosophy was to confront the isolation that he and others with developmental disabilities face in our community.

Francis' remedy for the isolation was simple, direct and immediately applicable within our community. It may have been a proposal to establish more homes and assisted living supports for "people like me," or a plan for more jobs like his at McDonalds, or nomination papers for positions in community organizations like SACL and People First. Each week I would write down his ideas so he could present them to "the people in charge."

He was very interested in the LArche movement, and was active in advocating for its establishment in Saskatoon. I will always remember the day he met Jean Vanier, and I am glad that Francis was able to see the formation of the Saskatoon LArche Project before he died.

It was not always work. We celebrated our birthdays with dinners at Peter D's or the Miramar Restaurant. Every Sunday my son and I would join Francis at church, where he occupied a front pew with his housemates Don and Orest. I often saw him out walking near the Mall, or at an ACL event. He had many friends; everybody knew Francis. When we first met I wanted to ask him "what is it like to live with Down syndrome?" but then I realized that I could not ask the question, for in the asking I would somehow set myself apart from him, and in this 'apartness' I would reinforce the curtains of isolation he fought against. He taught me, through his example, that at great depths authentic simplicity is found.

With his passing, my job as scribe for Francis is finished. I wish I kept a file of his notes, his plans, his memos, his proposals, for the file would be substantial. If I were asked what his constant themes were, they would be: close the institutions; organize more jobs for "people like me"; build more homes "like the one I live in."

My life is less full with Francis gone, and like many others, I miss him. To Francis, "eternal memory"!

(Halabura, who will always think of himself as Francis' friend, is active in disability issues.)

New SACL president elected in June – Commitment to family, friends the foundation of activism

By Karin Melberg Schwier

It's both feet and arms to the elbows when Laurie Larson decides to commit herself to something. As a busy mother of three sons, Larson became an activist for people with intellectual disabilities. It happened because, she says, the future of her sons and others with a disability depends on how well advocates plan for and create the future. Holding back because change ruffles feathers, challenges territory or demands new ways of thinking isn't acceptable, she says. "It isn't enough to believe in something. You must be prepared to act on those beliefs."

While the issue of helping people leave large institutions has been a priority for her personally and for the SACL, she is still surprised that people who are entrenched in providing and participating in large, congregated and segregated services for people with disabilities are upset by the idea of change. This evolution represents step-by-step progress, she says, "towards a society where everyone with an intellectual disability is included in society with their needs met and rights respected." It takes concerted effort and a clear message with real life examples to break down the old stereotypes, she adds. Moving people from client to citizen is difficult when so many traditional attitudes call for charitable care of people with disabilities.

"People need to realize that disability is a natural part of human diversity and that there is nothing special about people with intellectual disabilities being included in all aspects of community life," Larson insists. "It is what they deserve and we should expect no less."

Being part of a nation-wide federation of ACLs and a member of the Canadian ACL helps Larson "take a wider view" of what is confronting families here at home. It's very useful and instructive to learn from other parents across the country who have dealt with issues and, in turn, "I can offer a Saskatchewan perspective to others. The CACL is attuned to community living work around the world, so it really is reassuring to know we are part of something that is changing and growing internationally."

Larson points to a number of priorities for her term and beyond. Among them, inclusive education and Individualized Funding. The Department of Learning is working on changes to the Education Act for the first time in 15 years. Larson has advised Learning officials that "inclusive education has to be the starting point for all children. It cannot be a goal a student has to work towards. It must be mandated in the Act." The

Association will continue to advocate for the creation of an individual funding system to increase the number of available choices. "While it may not be something everyone wants, it will help relieve some of the pressure of waitlists for existing services."

Pursuing various priorities is how the SACL helps families along the way, she says. The Association isn't single-minded and, as president, Larson wants to make sure people with intellectual disabilities and families around the province know they can look to the SACL for all kinds of support, help and guidance. "I think it's up to us to re-invent a better way, to learn from the last 50 years to make supports, services and attitudes better so that there doesn't exist a support, service and attitude gap between 'client' and 'citizen.'"

The Association has existed for five decades "and we've evolved, but we've always been grounded in the idea that people's lives are complex," she explains. "Needs can be complex, but that's not an excuse to give up on helping a family create an interesting and purposeful life for each unique person," adds Larson, who was elected as provincial president in June. She plans to keep her sleeves rolled up in that role for her term. Along with the SACL board, she wants to ensure decision-makers in the province understand the issues.

Car lottery winners



On October 27, SACL President Laurie Larson and Past President Judy McLaughlin rolled the huge drum of thousands of tickets purchased in the SACL 2007 Car Lottery. Larson plucked out the lucky two winners in front of a shopping mall crowd. The grand prize 2007 V-6 Ford Mustang convertible went to Sheldon Green, Regina (pictured); Bill Marchuk, Moose Jaw, took home the Panasonic 42" HD Plasma TV. Watch for details on the 2008 Lottery in the spring *Dialect*.

New home to offer enhanced supports

Seven people with intellectual disabilities “will be able to live more independently and enjoy an enhanced level and range of services,” states a government media release at the official opening of the new North View Home in Prince Albert.

“This project demonstrates once again the province’s commitment to building independence and to achieving the full participation and inclusion of people with disabilities,” said then Community Resources Minister and Minister Responsible for Disability Issues Kevin Yates. “We will continue to work to provide all Saskatchewan people with the opportunity to contribute to and benefit from the economic, social and cultural life of the province to the extent that they are able, and ensure that no one is left behind.”

The new home, an initiative of the Community Living

Division of Community Resources, will provide 24-hour residential supports for the people who live there, and will also serve as the base of operations for a crisis support program in Prince Albert. The crisis support program will offer preventative education and outreach services to community-based organizations across Saskatchewan that support people with intellectual disabilities living in their own homes. The new home will also provide a temporary place to stay for people with intellectual disabilities when enhancements are occurring to the supports within their homes.

“This new home replaces an aging building that no longer meets the needs of those served in the North View program,” Yates said. Five people will live in one area of the home; two will be supported in the short-term respite area.

SACL leaves partnership to reclaim independence

There were no sinister reasons behind SACL’s decision to leave the decade-old partnership of SACL-Community Living Division-Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres. It was simply time to move on, says SACL Executive Director Faith Bodnar. “The partnership was signed in 1997 and we’ve done a lot of good work together. We look forward to finding new ways to work with CLD and SARC, and we look forward to carving out new partnerships with others based on areas of common concern.”

The Partnership had increasingly become a place of debate on issues, particularly those not aligned with SACL’s commitment to full inclusion. Fundamental differences in

philosophy about segregated services suggested to the SACL that a move was called for. Bodnar, and SACL President Laurie Larson, do not anticipate any change in the way SACL, CLD, and SARC representatives work together on front-line issues.

“Leaving the Partnership was not done with any ill will, and we feel we can still work together on common concerns and interests,” notes Larson. “We plan to work with CLD, SARC and other groups to build communities throughout this province that include all people with intellectual disabilities with the supports and accommodations they require to be full citizens.”

Conference promotes gentle caring

By Connie Jones

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”
- Margaret Mead

It was a week of international excitement as over 180 people from Belgium, Canada, Denmark, England, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, and the USA converged in Saskatoon this fall for the annual Gentle Teaching International conference. On the agenda: making care settings places of gentleness for marginalized individuals or those who’ve met with difficult life challenges.

Highlights from the workshops included Dr. Charles Conant, who was selectively mute until age 21 and now holds four Masters Degrees, a Doctorate in Ministry, and is a behaviour specialist serving 37,000 at-risk teens in South

Carolina. In his heartfelt session, Charles talked about needing to “listen with your heart” when working with people who’ve experienced trauma.

Nerina Robson of Winnipeg demonstrated the power of Gentle Teaching with children who have been labeled ‘challenging’, focusing particularly on how to use PATH (Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope), a planning tool to assist teachers and other educators to develop peaceful classroom environments. “PATH is an excellent tool to promote justice and human value as well as a powerful community building tool,” said Nerina, who showed examples of PATHs that have been used to promote gentleness within classrooms with individual children and education teams. Participants discussed obstacles often encountered in classrooms with children with special needs,

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Relationships are the future

By Faith Savarese

I have seen the future and the future is us. It is Shane and Brenda, and Lynn, and Jo and Shannon, and Dave, Faith, Carolyn, Gloria, Sherrie, Jamie, Bob, Mary, Laurie. The future is all of us taking care of one another and cherishing one another's presence.

I'm humbled because I'm sure that compared to many, my knowledge and experience are only a drop in the bucket. I'm sure that many others are so much better at relationships and cherishing people than I. If you ask most people what the most important thing in the world is to them, they would probably tell you friends and family. I have a card on my desk of two children growing up in a developing country; they're skinny, they're not well dressed and they are running down the street chasing a rusty metal ring that looks like an old bicycle rim. The card says, "Where there are friends, there are riches."

There are riches because where there are friends, there is love, belonging and acceptance. With these we can survive most anything. While I know this at a very deep level that resonates in my soul, in my own life I'm not very good at relationships. I'm ashamed to say, I spend most of my time at work, and when not at work, I'm cleaning my house. Because, for me, having a clean house is something I think I can control. I've also fooled myself into thinking that having a tidy house brings harmony. The point is that it is very easy to lose focus on what is important.

I challenge you to look at how much time and energy is being put toward developing relationships for your son or daughter with disabilities. While we put a lot of effort into developing and guaranteeing the apparent "basics" in life for our loved ones, we should pay as much attention to the most fundamental of all human needs – love and friendship. I recently read that "good services do not necessarily equate to a good life." In *A Good Life for You and Your Relative with a Disability*, Al Etmanski writes, "The best guarantee of a safe and secure future for a person with a disability is the number of caring committed friends, family members, acquaintances and supporters actively involved in your loved one's life."

So, what does qualify me to talk about relationships? For some time now, the Regina and District Association for Community Living has been exploring the topic of relationships. About eight years ago, when I was first hired by the Association, I was to establish "Circles of Friends." Our idea was to find three or four people for whom we could develop a "circle," illustrating to the community how the concept worked. But the idea met with a lot of resistance, particularly with the schools. People at one school, for example, were concerned with liability issues and those at another were concerned with my credentials.

After this contract, I was hired as a family support coordinator. Still believing that relationships were somehow

a key for people, I placed ads with Volunteer Regina for what I called "Community Connectors." The idea was to find volunteers for a one-to-one with a person with an intellectual disability, and who would act as a connector to the community. They would work with the individual to identify what he or she would most like to do and then help them to do it. For example, if the individual wanted to attend a class run by the City of Regina, the connector would find someone in the class who would be willing to assist. The notion really was that the volunteer would act to introduce the person to others in the community. Those ads were placed with Volunteer Regina for about two years, and I don't think in all that time I had one inquiry regarding those Community Connector positions.

About this time, while working as the Family Support Coordinator for RDAACL, I received a call from a social worker in a rural area not too far from Regina. Someone she worked with was coming to Regina for surgery. Her name was Blanche. She was about 60 years old, had an intellectual disability and could not communicate well verbally. We were also told that she had no family, although we learned much too late that she had two sisters. Could we meet her at the hospital and provide some support so she didn't have to go through this experience alone?

I took the request to the members of RDAACL's Personal Support Committee and I visited with Blanche before the surgery. She was a sprite, with a gleam in her eye and she liked to go outside the hospital to have a smoke. Eventually, Blanche had the surgery. Then she had to have another; her gallbladder was removed and I think her bowel was perforated in the second surgery. By then, Blanche was not doing well. We kept visiting her and find out what we could about her care. We became familiar with the nurses who loved Blanche. One of them brought her a teddy bear, which she loved. Blanche had very few visitors from her hometown.

Over time, it became apparent to us that Blanche was not going to make it. Finally, late one night I was called to the hospital. Blanche was dying. When I got there, I in turn called a member of the Personal Support Committee, Ann Robinson. Ann and I sat by Blanche's bedside and held her hands – as the nurses took care of her, they also took care of us – bringing us blankets, thanking us for being there. Ann and I were with Blanche when she died later that night.

It is not the number of people who appreciate us and who will miss us when we are gone. But I do like the notion of living in a world where an individual's presence is cherished, even by a few others. When Blanche died that night, we had such a good understanding of who was leaving us. We cried. The nurses cried. I guess that's the point; Blanche had several people who shed tears when she left this world. That's the ultimate in relationship.

The people in my daughter's life

By Jan Moerike



Ashleigh Ferguson puts the strong arm on the instructor during a Norman McKenzie Gallery drop-in art class with friend Dionne Roland, left.

My daughter Ashleigh Ferguson has an amazing personal support network. You may not be familiar with the term, but you probably do have one. I think of it as the family and friends who know us, love us and whom we would contact to share our—and their—joys and sorrows. Sadly, people with disabilities often don't have as much of a network as they need or want, and are often quite isolated.

Networks are a two way street and Ashleigh certainly contributes to hers. She is known as the 'hostess with the mostest' because she loves to have people come to her place and loves to be wherever people are gathering.

Many of Ashleigh's dreams have come true as the group does a PATH with her from time to time, and works together to make her dreams happen. Ashleigh's network started almost 14 years ago, when she was 16. Yes, my little girl will be 30 years old this Fall. Initially a few of my friends got together to discuss what would happen to Ashleigh in the future. Since we were a two-person family at that time (both Ashleigh's dad and younger brother had died), I was very concerned about what would happen to her when I died. I also thought that the natural order of things is for children to move into their own place, at least eventually.

We had heard of PLAN (Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network) several years before and liked the concept but it had not yet come to Saskatchewan. We used the concept anyway but did not have a facilitator until three or four years ago when we became Lifetime Members of PLAN Regina. A facilitator is a person hired by the individual/family to build a network if necessary, and to keep existing networks viable and dynamic. Facilitators are recruited and trained by PLAN but employed by the family. Any person with a disability is a good candidate for a network. Everyone has a contribution to make, but it is more difficult—but not impossible—if the individual has no family support.

Initially Ashleigh's network consisted of my friends. Today it consists of three original members, as well as her stepfather, myself, her roommate, about ten young women and her facilitator. Ashleigh seems to bring out the best in these young women. In the years they have been in my daughter's network, I have seen amazing personal growth, both in Ashleigh and all of her network members. Recently they organized a garage sale with Ash over three days. The only thing I had to contribute

were the treasures from our house that we no longer needed, my husband's strong back, and the neighbour's tables to put stuff on.

People do come and go to some extent. One long-term member just followed her heart to Ontario. Another lives in B.C. but phones now and then and always visits Ashleigh when she is back. Another just graduated and no longer works with Ashleigh but wants to stay involved. Several of Ash's former roommates are in her network.

Our most recent endeavour is to get as many people as possible trained in Gentle Teaching and, so far five people are trained. It is good to have the majority of people in Ashleigh's life on the same page. As her mom, it is wonderful for me to see my daughter thriving in a gentle, safe and fun environment. A lot of Ashleigh's friends started out as her employees. It is not recommended by PLAN to have employees on a Network but for us it works. The reason for this is that they are not just employees. They have become Ashleigh's friends, mentors, family and cheering section. She has gained a great quality of life as they include her in their parties, camping, trips to Watrous, weddings and their extended families, many of which now include babies and dogs. They have forged friendships with her and with each other. We have gained a lot of daughters and a couple of grandchildren!

Everyone seems to find their own niche in Ashleigh's network. John helps me when dealing with government issues. Recently, at our request, he demolished a flowerbed in the front yard of my daughter's house. Jean does payroll for all the staff. Linda is always there to talk to; she and her husband help with minor repairs around the house. Karen used to do scheduling of staff. Melissa has done this for a couple of years now and is ready to pass on that particular torch. Both Karens have made Ashleigh into Honourary Auntie to their beautiful sons. We recently painted Ashleigh's living room and hall and a lot of talented painters showed up, thank goodness! Ashleigh's life would not be so full and satisfying without all these people.

My horoscope in the paper on August 1 read, "Your support network is even more supportive than usual. Through them you have the resources needed to bring your fantasy down from the sky and onto paper." Wow! Whoever wrote that must have met Ashleigh and all the people who are so important in her life.

(Jan Moerike, also known as Ashleigh's mom, lives in Regina.)



Ashleigh and her network at a spa weekend jaunt to Watrous; she came home with her hair streaked, says her mom.

On the Shelf



More Than A Mom: Living a full and balanced life when your child has special needs, by Amy Baskin and Heather Fawcett

Bethesda, MD: Woodbine House, 2006.

Book review by Bluesette Campbell

What an incredibly inspirational read! Although not every single chapter could be applied to my life, a very large percentage

could and it felt as though Amy Baskin and Heather Fawcett had surveyed me when writing the book. I'm very impressed with how comprehensive it is. There is not a "T" uncrossed. When I found myself with an unanswered question, there would be a paragraph or a chapter regarding that issue shortly thereafter. I also found it very practical. I can open it anywhere, work through a suggested exercise and immediately feel like I've made progress towards leading a more balanced life. Any mom can relate to this book because there is such a wide representation of women and their different stages of life and their different levels of accepting diagnoses.

Reading this book was a journey for me. When I started reading *More Than A Mom*, I was feeling very on top of my game. I had just successfully introduced my child with special needs into the education system and all was going well. I had speech on Tuesdays, physio every second Thursday, social integration on Fridays, fiddle lessons here, early intervention there. I was feeling very accomplished, optimistic and most importantly like I was providing the best for my child.

I began reading this book but felt that I was strictly reading it for the purposes of a review. However, at some point, I began losing control of my life. I had lost touch with my optimism, I was not taking good care of myself and my time management and multitasking skills seemingly disappeared into thin air. I had put the book down for weeks while the stress kept building. It did not occur to me that that was my first mistake. The content of this book was exactly what I needed to keep reading, to keep telling myself that my feelings of being overwhelmed and sometimes beaten by life are common. I am not the only one who has to learn to overcome the hurdles of raising a child with unconventional needs.

A month or so later I began to walk with my head a little higher and picked up the book again. The reminder of how important it is to take care of myself *first* really hit home and slowly I began to pull up out of the slump. *Balance* is the keyword here. I realize now that while I was feeling

very accomplished and like I was providing the best for my child, I was not balanced. I was putting everything I had into creating the perfect world for my oldest son and that while I was doing that, I was leaving very little left for me, my husband or my other son. So, I'm left with the realization that I don't have it all figured out, but I don't have to do it on my own, and books like *More Than A Mom* really help to keep me on track.

(Bluesette Campbell was born and raised in the northwestern U.S. and attended university in upstate New York. She is now a mother of two boys, 4 and 1, and lives and works on a cattle ranch near Meadow Lake with her husband, Mark, and his family. This book is available on loan from the SACL's Resource Centre or it can be ordered from your local bookstore in Canada with ISBN 978-1-890627-51-5, or visit www.woodbinehouse.com.)

PLAN books at London Drugs

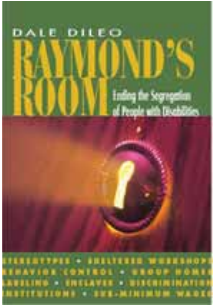
As of September, families can purchase *A Good Life*, *Peace of Mind*, and *The Company of Others* at select London Drugs stores across BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Find the store closest to you through the London Drugs store locator. Books, CD-ROMs and brochures are available in the pharmacy department; you can also inquire at customer service or the pharmacy desk. For more information on the London Drugs/PLAN partnership, go to www.londondrugs.com or contact PLAN at kfmader@plan.ca

Borrow resources online

The Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) allows people to search the extensive John Dolan Resource Centre library holdings and place orders for materials, all online. Follow the link at <http://www.sacl.org/library>. To book, reserve, borrow or rent resources from the Centre catalogue, contact Lalita Martfeld, librarian, to receive a unique user name and password. Phone (306) 955-3344, ext. 20 or email: johndolan.rc@sacl.org.

This library, housed at the SACL provincial building, is one of Canada's most extensive lending libraries of its kind open to not only its own members, but to the general public. The collection features resources on intellectual and other disabilities, inclusion and all aspects of community living. More than 5,000 items including books, reports, video and audio materials, journals, training kits, and information packages are available. A vast range of information is offered, from archival materials to the most current resources available including SACL-published materials. The Resource Centre loans most materials free of charge. Some borrowing fees apply to specific materials, and some are only available for in-house viewing. As much advance notice as possible is requested; return is expected promptly to avoid delays for other patrons.

In conversation with Dale Dileo



Thirty years ago, as a young man working at a facility for children with autism, Dale DiLeo was shown a tiny, hot and smelly bedroom. Reserved for up to four young men with autism, those least trusted by staff, this room was locked—from the outside—all night long. It was named after Raymond, the room's perennial resident. *Raymond's Room* makes a compelling case that today, people with disabilities are still locked away from the rest of society. They may not be necessarily housed in rooms like

Raymond's, but they are placed in facilities and programs run by a public monopoly unwilling to change.

"People with disabilities are the last minority group in which legal segregation for housing and employment is still routinely provided," writes DiLeo. "And their lives are controlled by one of the last publicly-funded monopolies in America today." Using research, anecdotes, and captivating stories, DiLeo takes aim at the billion-dollar "disability industrial complex" that segregates people with significant disabilities from mainstream life... For over 230 pages, DiLeo describes the downsides to current practices in the field and then offers up proven alternatives. This interview is reprinted in *Dialect* with his permission.

Q: Why did you write a book condemning the segregation of people with disabilities at this point in your career?

Dileo: I spent the first ten years of my career working in or running facilities that were segregated programs. As my philosophy evolved, and my skills developed along with the disability field, I starting working more with supported employment and supported living, more integrated approaches. This is what I have been doing for the last twenty years of my career. But now, despite overwhelming evidence on the benefits of integration, I believe the disability field is still stuck in an obsolete model that is ineffective, morally wrong, and resisting change. Every day the number of people going into segregated programs far exceed those in more integrated ones. This book is my attempt to call attention to that fact, and to talk about what is possible.

Q: You compare the disability service system to Eisenhower's military industrial complex. Is that a fair comparison?

Dileo: As someone who worked from the inside of it, I think it is. Eisenhower rightly warned us of a self-perpetuating focus on maintaining funding, lots of bureaucracy, and results that don't always make it to the people most in need. For all the paperwork, there is little real accountability to the people being served.

Q: Proponents of institutions or workshops and group homes say that people have chosen these options and that they report they are happy there.

Dileo: Yes, I know that can be true, but it is an incomplete statement. I remember working to help people move out of an institution, a place most of us would agree was horribly offensive. Yet, there were a number of people who expressed that they did not want to leave, and some of their families also said the same thing. The reason this happens over and over again is that people with disabilities have not had the opportunity to make informed choices. Once people experience community life with the proper supports, in my experience, they nearly always elect to not go back to segregation. When you live in a situation for so long, no

matter how inadequate, change can appear threatening. I might add, I think there is a strong argument against the wisdom of using taxpayer dollars to fund a choice that segregates people at all, besides the fact of them having inferior outcomes.

Q: What about people with disabilities who have other friends with disabilities? Why shouldn't they choose to live or work together?

Dileo: First of all, loneliness is a compelling issue for anyone who finds him or herself isolated in the community. There is no excuse for those of us in the disability field to let such a thing happen when people live and work in a community. As for friendships between people with disabilities, of course that should be supported and respected. And if people decide they want to live together because they are friends, then I think they should go for it. But that is a far cry from an arbitrary group model where people are placed into slots and rarely select their own roommates. Employment, on the other hand, is something else. Unless some friends who happen to have disabilities want to start a business together, I don't think you can typically pick your co-workers.

Q: What is Raymond's Room?

Dileo: Raymond's Room was bedroom in a residential facility for children with autism that I worked at early in my career. It was a small, hot, stuffy room where between two to four children would sleep. These were the kids that no one trusted or who had misbehaved during the day. Raymond was in there so often it was named after him. It was locked from the outside – those on the inside were powerless. It is my metaphor for much of the disability service system then and now.

Q: You present an argument for people with disabilities living in the community, but you also talk at length and give examples about how the community has not always welcomed people with disabilities. Isn't that a paradox?

Dileo: Yes, it is. But a big part of the reason there has been community resistance is the disability service system's tendency to exaggerate people's differences rather than their commonalities. Group homes are different that your neighbor's house in so many ways, so the residents that live there are not seen as your neighbor. There have always been stereotypes of people with disabilities, but our jargon and labels and grouping have contributed to those stereotypes rather than combatted them. Another problem is that many people have discomfort being with people with disabilities, mostly because they never are with them because the system has segregated people with disabilities out of their communities. When my daughter goes to school with other children who happen to have disabilities, plays with them, and finds it a natural thing, she will not think twice when someone with a disability works next to her or moves next door. And I have found many people with disabilities benefit tremendously being around others with skills they might not have or interests they haven't considered. And if someone with a disability has a particular hobby or passion, then that becomes a basis for a relationship because they are around a diversity of people, and not just those who share their disability label.

(Raymond's Room: Ending the Segregation of People with Disabilities is available on loan from the SACL's John Dolan Resource Centre. This August 2006 interview was reprinted in Dialect with permission. For more information about Dale Dileo or to purchase this and other books, visit: www.daledileo.com.)

participating in the response and “taking an active part in the management of the supports or resources.” Without individualized funding and individually funded services, people with intellectual disabilities and their families will never have person-centred service delivery.

Actions to Date By and large, the actions taken in regards to the 2001 Disability Action Plan are too little, too late. They do not even begin to address the issues we see daily in our work with individuals and families. Many families become discouraged that they are fighting the same battles they fought ten or fifteen years ago, without success. Disability supports, health care, education and income are all areas in which the actions have not made a significant difference in the lives of people with disabilities and their families. After six years, the initial hope and promise of the Disability Action Plan has been lost. People have waited too long for substantive change. An example of an “action to date” being inadequate is the development of an individualized funding (IF) option for home care through the health regions. This option is indeed available, but only in rare cases. The majority of people who apply are turned down because of waiting lists, while there are no waiting lists for government-run home care services. For the few individuals who have managed to receive IF for their personal care needs, they are denied other supports as a back up plan and they cannot hire anyone who is trained and employed by the health region. In essence, IF in Home Care is a program that failed to make a difference.

The redesigned respite program did increase support to parents who needed additional respite, but the income test that was added left out many families for whom the impact of disability was substantial. Income and IQ testing are barriers to families accessing the support they need.

In the area of education, we've lost ground in the past few years. Changes to designated student funding meant that funding is now determined by the impact of disability, but no longer carries the same individualized accountability for each child. Parents are seeing program cuts and even fewer options than they previously had. Children need to be included with their peers and supported to be in regular classrooms if they are going to have the same opportunities as other students.

While the cost of living rose in Saskatchewan, people with disabilities, making up 77% of the long-term caseload, have languished on welfare. Minimal action has been taken in this area. The poverty of people with disabilities must be addressed if we are to claim that Saskatchewan is a place where no one is left behind.

(For more information, contact SACL President Laurie Larson or Executive Director Faith Bodnar, ph: (306) 955-3344.)

and goals. The person with a disability can, if they wish, receive money directly from the government to purchase the supports and services they choose instead of using the services currently provided for them. Funding can be sent directly to the person—or a parent/support person or team acting on the person's behalf—and that money is used to buy the services and supports the individual needs. Individualized Funding has been used successfully in many other parts of Canada for over 25 years.

Individually Funded Services are those that are planned around the individual's needs and are delivered by agencies that provide services to people with disabilities. Through IFS, the individual's personal plan will still be at the centre of all planning but the administration and provision of the services is done by a service provider. If the person with a disability or their family decides that their needs can be better met through another service provider, they can choose, with appropriate planning and notice, to have their funding moved to another agency. The funding is portable. It 'follows' the person when they move to another service provider or community.

“At this time, there are a very limited number of IF and IFS plans in Saskatchewan. We believe that all people with intellectual disabilities should have the right to choose IF or IFS,” says Hannah. “People who have been able to get IF say that controlling their own funding helps them to get the kind of supports and services they want. They say that their life is better overall through having choices and control. They can explore supported employment opportunities, daytime activities and housing options that were not available before,” she adds. “Some people have been able to own their own homes, hire staff, and get out in the community more often.” Also, Hannah says, “People who have access to IFS negotiate directly with their service provider as they need to. They can change which service provider they use if they find their needs are not being met.”

SACL is currently working with several families to develop IF proposals for consideration by the Community Living Division. A series of community information meetings will be held around the province to raise awareness about IF and what it can look like for families. “Our hope is that within the next six months, the CLD will begin to approve a few proposals,” Hannah says, “and that over time we will demonstrate IF projects are the progressive way forward to make sure Saskatchewan residents with disabilities have the choice to find services appropriate to make their goals and dreams come true.”

(For more information: Judy Hannah, SACL IF/IFS Project, 3031 Louise Street, Saskatoon, SK S7J 3L1, ph: (306) 955-3344; email: judy.hannah@sacl.org.)

Training Bulletin

FASD workshops, Dec. 2007, Melfort, Moose Jaw, Weyburn with Dan Dubovsky. Offered by the FASD Support Network of Saskatchewan. Participants will gain a better understanding of FASD and learn practical support strategies aimed at improving the lives of children, youth and adults affected by FASD. Registration deadline is November 21, 2007. There is no fee and lunch will be provided. All workshops are 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.: Melfort, Travelodge, December 5; Moose Jaw, Heritage Inn, December 10; Weyburn, Travelodge, December 11, 2007. Contact: Meghan at fasdoffice@sasktel.net or ph: (306) 975-0896.

Girl Power Camp, Dec. 8, Regina. The Voice is sponsoring an opportunity for young women with disabilities, ages 13–21, to participate in workshops designed to empower and encourage self-esteem and participate in developing a resource guide to assist other young women with disabilities. Topics will include self-esteem; empowerment; safety; abuse and dispelling myths surrounding disability. Space limited; all expenses plus honourarium paid. Contact Ronda: Toll Free: 1-877-569-3111 or in Regina (306) 569-3111 or email: ronda@saskvoice.com.

Weaving the Ties That Bind: Online training course for facilitating social support networks, Jan. 1-31, 2008 (self-paced), approx. 20–25 hours. Facilitated social support networks are an effective way to address the isolation and loneliness of many people living on the margins of our society. These networks (also known as “circles of friends”) are proven to contribute to the health,

safety and well-being of individuals who are vulnerable as a result of age, disability or social circumstance. Building on 18 years of experience in facilitating hundreds of social support networks for people living in isolation, PLAN Institute for Caring Citizenship has created an online course for facilitators. This course provides participants with the knowledge and skills necessary to become a social network facilitator. Course comprises: 1. Understanding social support network facilitation 2. Preparing to develop a social support network 3. Addressing challenges and building confidence as a facilitator. Who should take this course? • Individuals working with people who are socially isolated including seniors, people with disabilities and/or chronic health challenges, youth and new immigrants. • Community organizers, social workers, and health workers • Case managers and resource brokers • Classroom assistants and youth workers • Residential and life skills workers • Families and caregivers. Experience the convenience and benefits of online learning. The course includes: • instructional video clips • web links to essential resources • chat rooms for scheduled and informal cyber-meetings • discussion boards to post messages or comments • online support from the course moderator • course materials including a book, CD-ROM and DVD • self check exercises and certificate of completion. \$325 CDN, materials included. Space is limited. To register, contact PLAN Institute, 260-3665 Kingsway, Vancouver, BC V5R 5W2. Contact Helena at hflaming@plan.ca or ph: (604) 439-9566 to register or for further information.

Gentle caring... continued from page 17

and were guided through the process to get a first-hand experience of a PATH with the ultimate dream being that every child feels safe and loved.

Most people who have taken a Gentle Teaching night class here in Saskatchewan have seen footage of Ronald, a young man whose violent behaviours had his caregivers at a loss. Marjan and Laurence, two caregivers from his agency in the Netherlands, gave an update on Ronald's life as it is today, with gentle caregivers who committed to seeing past the behaviors and into the person of Ronald as a valuable and loving person. Over the past few years, Marjan and Laurence worked toward helping Ronald realize his worth, and teaching him to value himself and those around him. What an astounding transformation to witness! For those who understood where Ronald has come from, this was a deeply moving session.

Each day of the conference was highlighted by words from Gentle Teaching founder Dr. John McGee. John reminded us that as caregivers, we need to be consciously present in the everyday moments that build upon each other to form moral memories deep within those whom we serve. “Caregiving is an act of the moment,” said John. “If you go

for things other than that, you can unintentionally cause violence.”

One conference attendee had taken a Gentle Teaching night class before, and agreed with it in theory. But, she said, “Hearing it come straight from John allowed what I already knew in my head to go deeper into my heart than it ever had before.” Another sentiment often echoed was, ‘Where do we go from here? How can we move forward as agents of change in our society, our community, and our agencies?’ As so beautifully depicted by Ronald's caregivers, it starts with a deep commitment to the individual in our care. Caregivers can also continue studying the value of gentleness through Gentle Teaching workshops offered across Saskatchewan. The 2008 Gentle Teaching International Conference will be held in Puerto Rico. For information: <http://www.gti2008.com/>.

(Connie Jones was conference coordinator for Gentle Teaching International 2007. She is also Professional Development Coordinator at the Saskatchewan Literacy Network www.sk.literacy.ca. You may reach her at connieljones@shaw.ca.)

National report card on inclusion being developed

“For the first time ever, the Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL) is developing a National Report Card on Inclusion,” says President Zuhy Sayeed. “When it’s launched at our 50th Anniversary in November 2008, it will give us and our governments a clear idea about the state of inclusion in Canada.”

In November 2007, CACL issued its interim report card on how Canada is measuring up when it comes to the inclusion and participation of persons with intellectual disabilities and their families. The first report card comments on four key priorities: deinstitutionalization, disability supports, family supports, and inclusive education.

In each of the four areas, the report includes:

- The benchmarks, the vision for each goal;
- What the data says relative to selected indicators, measuring what Canada’s performance is on these issues;
- Analysis of the problems/challenges for individuals and families;
- The ways in which the Federation is contributing to the attainment of the goals in each area.

“We want to make sure the report card is accurate and reflective of the voices of people with intellectual disabilities and their families,” says CACL Executive Vice President Michael Bach. “In order to do this we are getting help from all members of our Federation. People are submitting their own stories in the four key areas and parents are completing a survey on inclusive education.”

The report card will showcase these stories and illustrations about the successes and challenges of inclusion. CACL is gathering a range of stories from a range of participants; personal stories, family stories, stories from teachers, community members, employers are being compiled. People have been asked to share their experience by focusing on any of the four priority areas. For information, contact: Anna MacQuarrie at CACL, email: amacquarrie@cacl.ca.



Peace activists

Relationships form the give and take of the human experience. With them we know we matter to others and that others make us whole. Mom Sherri Husch-Foote took this photo of her daughter Dani in grade two at Winston Churchill School, Lloydminster. Danielle, now in grade 11, can still claim a lot of the kids in the photo as great friends. Her dad Colin is “a Volkswagen fan and a bit of a hippie, so Dani liked to teach everyone to use the peace sign; not a bad message then or now,” says Husch-Foote, the executive director of the Lloydminster ACL.

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