



PARENTING WITH A DISABILITY BULLETIN

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PDN UPDATE

By Nancy Barry



Happy New Year to all you PDN Members out there. I hope the holidays were kind to you and I hope you're all surviving this cold, winter weather we have been experiencing this year.

A lot has happened since the last time we checked in. My goal is to keep you as up-to-date as possible with current events, important updates, community networking opportunities and much more. The PDN has a lot of special events lined up for this year, so please keep a close watch on your mailboxes for more information.

This year's PDN Picnic will be happening in High Park on Saturday July 16th, 2011. For the past two or three years, the picnic has been held in August, but this year we were able to secure a permit for July, in order to accommodate all our August vacationers. Stay tuned for further details in the near future.

Mid Winter Gathering 2011

This year's Mid Winter Gathering for parents and prospective parents with disabilities was a smashing success. With the new addition of Karaoke, we were able to see who will be the next potential Canadian Idols. Along with bingo, raffle prizes and refreshments, the warmth inside made us forget the cold, chilly winter weather outside. Everyone seemed to have a really great time! Here are a few snapshots from the day:



Preparing for Parenthood: Is Parenting for You?

The PDN is in the midst of another exciting initiative which is preparing a curriculum for a seminar of parenting with a disability geared towards people with disabilities who are thinking of becoming parents, but feel that they need to become more informed. It has been my experience in the many years that I have worked with the PDN that many new parents feel overwhelmed, and are at times, misinformed, about what services and technologies are out there. As persons living with a disability, it's apparent that no matter what the situation, we always have to plan ahead, navigating through systemic and attitudinal barriers. This applies to parenting as well.

Many times I have received calls from social workers and/or prospective parents who are about to give birth within a few weeks, asking about various supports and services that may or may not be available to them. When I explain that there are not a whole lot of supports out there, and that there is a waiting list for those supports that do exist, parents-to-be become anxious, scared and worried, which is the last thing mothers should be experiencing in their last weeks of pregnancy.

After careful consideration and countless hours of researching and utilizing existing resources, I have come up with the beginnings of, what I think, will serve as a useful and helpful training seminar for prospective parents with disabilities. It will consist of a six week session, each session geared towards a different topic relating to preparation for parenthood. I am hoping to have this training session ready by next fall. I'm very excited about this, as it is something I have wanted to engage in for a long time. Deciding to become a parent is a big decision for anyone, one that requires careful thought and planning. Add a disability into the scenario, and that makes the decision a little more complex. I am hopeful this training will provide prospective parents with disabilities with the information and resources that will instil a feeling of self confidence in their ability to become a good parent. Stay tuned for more details in upcoming issues of 'In the Stream' as well as the 'Parenting With a Disability Bulletin'.



Baby Time Show

This spring, the PDN will be having an information booth at the Baby Time Show. I think it's high time that PDN gets out into the public arena and demonstrates that we can be great parents too. The show takes place in April. If anyone's interested, please come down to the show. They'll be lots of exciting things to see. For more information, contact peers@cilt.ca.

Strength-based Parenting Initiative By Melanie Moore

Are you a parent with a disability? Are you a parent with a disability that would like more supports as a parent? Are you a prospective parent with a disability? Would you like to be able to talk to other parents with disabilities about the issues and concerns of parenting? If so, then we have some great news for you.

SPIN is a Strength based Parenting grassroots Initiative that developed out of several collaborative discussions since February 2010. The purpose of SPIN is to identify what gaps in services parents and prospective parents have faced, are facing and will face. The objective is to build a stronger community partnership with other community partners. In essence,

a Canadian 'Through the Looking Glass'.

The collaboration is a cross disability partnership with many other organizations including: The Centre for Independent Living (PDN), CNIB, Anne Johnston Health Station, Canadian Paraplegic Association, Citizens with Disabilities Ontario, G. Hope Enterprises, Ethno-Racial People with Disabilities Coalition of Ontario ERDCO, and several other individual community partners that aren't affiliated with a specific organization, but have quite a lot of expertise in the field of parenting.

We hope to expand our collaborative with other service organizations so that all disability groups are represented. We did host one focus group in October to find out what parents and prospective parents want and need so that we can determine where to go from there. For many parents that could not attend, Citizens With Disabilities Ontario did assist us in our online discussion. Some of the responses that we received from that focus group are as follows:

- Educate and train professionals like doctors, social workers, nurses etc.
- Offer peer support for parents and prospective parents.
- Include other disability groups in SPIN by connecting with the LGBTQ community, mental health

- and learning disabilities groups.
- Explore attendant care options for other disability groups.

Please consider giving us your feedback by contacting the coordinator, Melanie Moore, at 416-599-2458 ext. 228 or by email info@cilt.ca or melanie.moore@cilt.ca. In my experience as a parent of 3 boys, and a parent with a disability, I completely support that we all need support and resources. SPIN hopes to enhance the parenting experience by working collaboratively with all community agencies that wish to empower their members.

When parents have children, they don't always realize what resources are out there. Parents don't always know for example, what adaptive equipment is available so that they can parent more effectively. It is paramount to keep in mind that the UN has recently been ratified and one of those points is the right to family. SPIN would enhance this choice.



CILT Consumer Survey Focus Group

Every year CILT circulates a survey to our consumers to gain your input about CILT's programs and services. In doing so, we want to hear not only about what CILT is doing well, but where we can improve as well.

This year, we decided to host focus groups instead of circulating a written survey, in order to facilitate enhanced face-to-face interaction with our members.

Three focus groups were scheduled for November; one in the afternoon, one in the evening and one on a weekend to ensure that we would be gaining input from as many consumers as possible. Unfortunately, two focus groups were cancelled due to low response. To make the opportunity for feedback as accessible as possible for all of our consumers, CILT has added a Teleconference Focus Group for those who live further away, go to work, etc.

The one focus group that CILT did host in November was very successful. The information that was provided by consumers was very informative and will assist us with what CILT needs to do in order to improve our level of service delivery.

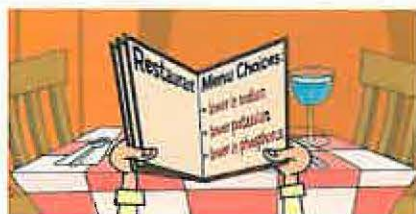
In the next issue of the 'PDN Bulletin', we will provide you with a

summary of the information collected from the two focus groups. Meanwhile, if anyone is still interested in providing input, and were unable to attend any of the scheduled focus groups, you can always send us your comments by email to peers@cilt.ca, or by phone (416) 599-2458, extension 270.

Diner's Club Peel

The Diner's Club Peel is in its fifth month and it is going strong! On average, every month we have around 18 to 25 people attending. We are continually receiving calls from consumers who are interested in joining, and at each event we continue to have new people come out. There are a lot of restaurants that the Diner's Club Peel can go to in Mississauga and Brampton because the area is much newer than Toronto, which means that the restaurants are a lot more accessible.

Because the Diner's Club Peel has been so



successful, and has already attended five restaurants, we think it is time for Peel Region to have their very own version of the Accessible Restaurant Directory. We are very excited to be working on this directory and we hope that it will be as successful as the one available to Toronto consumers.

Aging With a Disability: What's It Like?

People living with lifelong disabilities are now living longer than expected, and are now embarking upon another life transition - the aging process. They should be able to do so with dignity; this includes having access to all information and resources, having the choice of living at home with appropriate supports and services versus living in long term care facilities, accessing educational programs on health and nutrition, fitness programs and those designed to decrease social isolation as it relates to aging with a disability.

In the past getting older was not as large of an issue for people with disabilities as it is now, so how well will we live as we age? Now, people with disabilities are asking questions about the quality of our living and the quality of our aging. It is important that we keep ourselves as informed as possible on wellness, self care, health care, exercise and advocacy.

Secondary medical conditions such as respiratory illness, renal failure, accidents, infections, and depression, coupled with a general lack of adequate primary medical care, prevented most persons from experiencing their true life expectancy.

The "AGING WITH A DISABILITY WORKING GROUP" is

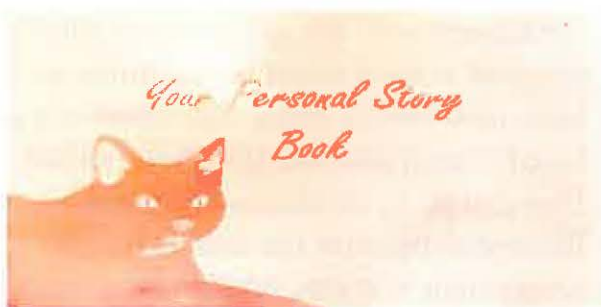


comprised of consumers and representatives from the cross-disability community who want to be able to anticipate the type, severity and course of age-associated changes focusing on experiences of aging. Through a consumer approach, we want to help identify what to expect, what preventative steps can be taken to ease the effects of aging on disability, how to translate living longer into living better and actively, how to prevent losing our achieved independence, and what to do to delay new conditions and increasing disability. We want to support aging consumers in mitigating risk factors (including effective use of assistive technology), accessing helpful resources that will offer knowledgeable review, assessment and intervention, and find options and choices regarding fitness, physical, social and financial options.

We intend to produce and promote change in civil society, including government, to integrate improvements and implementation of supports and services to ease the aging process for persons living with disabilities. This will be done through conducting a literature review of existing research, conducting consumer and service provider surveys, and raising

awareness with a view to develop an action plan.

The Aging With a Disability Working Group: Centre for Independent Living in Toronto (CILT), Access Apartments, Anne Johnston Health Station, ARCH Disability Law Centre, Birchmount Bluffs Neighbourhood Centre, CPA Ontario, Ethno-racial People with Disabilities (ERDCO), Huntington Society, MS Society, Muscular Dystrophy Canada (MDC), North Yorkers for Disabled Persons (NYDP), Ontario Federation for Cerebral Palsy (OFCP), and Tobias House Attendant Care.



And Hannah Makes

Three © By Kara Ayers; New Mobility Magazine, February 2011.

My family isn't one that can be captured by the stick figures you see adorning the back of so many mini-vans. It's not one illustrated in the pages of most children's books. And it's certainly not what most people would describe as your typical family. My husband, Adam, and I, have osteogenesis imperfecta. OI is a genetic

condition that causes our bones to break easily. We are little people and full-time wheelchair users. After dating for nine years, we were married almost two years ago. It was a day that was so perfect, it still feels like a dream.

I learned long ago that the stereotypes and judgments held by people about Adam and me aren't usually encased in their words. It's often what is not said. Several of our friends were married around the same time we were. Almost immediately after our celebrations, my fellow brides would complain about the annoyance they felt when people peppered them with questions about when they were going to have a baby. That certainly wasn't a question that people lined up to ask us.

It was a question, however, we were asking ourselves. With no models of a family like us, could we do it? We knew there was a 75 percent chance that Hannah would have some form of OI. Could we parent a child with OI? Would we be able to raise a child without OI? Few people know how much planning occurred in the months, and even years, leading up to those two beautiful pink lines on the pregnancy test. We'd found cribs, strollers and baby carriers that could work for us. I'd voraciously read anything I could from the perspective of other parents with disabilities. We'd had the life-changing opportunity to be godparents to a beautiful little girl, Jasmyn, whose

mother also has OI. We'd visited specialists, and my husband has a knack for mentally mapping how we'd make lifts and transfers to parent independently. We knew that we'd need different vehicles and it would be important to stay physically strong.

However, the most difficult preparations were those to mentally ready ourselves for the likely probability that there would be — and will always be — people who doubted our abilities and worth as parents.

After we announced our exciting news, people did finally ask a question: "Were you planning this?" They had absolutely no idea.

I can fully state that I was ready for parenthood. After Adam purchased half a dozen pregnancy tests to truly confirm the news, he was, too. My pregnancy was exceptionally healthy. I credit years of competitive swimming and the incredible foresight of my mother for ensuring that my body was strengthened by surgeries and physical therapy intended for greater goals than just the ability to walk. I swam several times a week for much of my pregnancy to maintain lung strength. With such tight quarters, my belly grew straight out. While teaching a college course later in my pregnancy, one of my students asked, "Are you going to get a maternity wheelchair, Mrs. Ayers?" The shift from children's to



maternity clothes was hard enough. Thankfully, I didn't get large enough to need a different wheelchair.

I did learn to push my chair differently, though. My growing baby graciously offered me a preview of what would be a requirement for my parenthood that wasn't discussed in the book, *What to Expect When You're Expecting*. Adam and I would need to redefine accessibility. It would no longer be determined by our individual abilities, but would be defined by the needs of our family. The process of redefinition was initiated by the sudden discovery that I could no longer bend forward to push up ramps or hills. I came to this unfortunate conclusion after pushing up ... and rolling back down a small incline from the parking lot to the building where I worked. It was an incline that I'd pushed up easily just days before. For the remainder of my pregnancy, I arranged to arrive at the same time as a co-worker who provided a quick push.

I began scanning parking lots, curb

cuts, and grassy areas with an even keener eye on incline. This skill has proven valuable. Our primary mode of transporting the baby outside the house is her stroller. Each of us guides it with one hand and pushes one of our wheels with the other. Too steep of an incline isn't an option until one of us learns to walk.

As my pregnancy progressed, we found that we'd also need to readjust our reactions to other people. Even blinded by hormones, I almost always found the humor in people's baffled expressions when they learned I was pregnant. For some people, it just did not compute. When I was around 8 months pregnant, we were congratulated by an employee of Babies R Us while we registered for a few last-minute items. She touched her heart and said, "It's so nice they let people like you adopt."

Many a sleepless night during pregnancy, I worried less about our family and more about the world my child would have to deal with.

Handling Others' Doubts

Ready or not, Hannah June entered this world on June 10, 2010. I was so incredibly grateful to have held her for 37.5 weeks. Her actual birthday remains somewhat of a blur. My epidural didn't go exactly as planned, and I was put under heavy anesthesia

seconds before her C-section birth. Somewhere between the rush of family members, friends and nurses, there were a few moments that I was alone with Hannah during her first few hours. I'd heard that it's an emotional time but thought the near completion of my Ph.D. in psychology could trump those pesky hormones. I was wrong. I cried and apologized to Hannah. I told her how much I already loved her, how she was perfect, and how her parents were not. My years of disability culture, advocacy and pride flew out that 11th story window. I knew it would not always be easy for Hannah to have parents with OI. Yet I apologized that day not for our imperfections, but for the heavy weight of oppression that she, too, will feel.

We brought Hannah home on the most beautiful Tuesday I've ever seen. This was the best day of my life. Her two bulldogs immediately displayed their cautious love and briefed her on their years of experience living with parents who have OI. Finally, we were able to put our plans into action. The transfers that we'd thought for months would work, did. And from the start, she has been a happy and healthy baby.

Wasting no time, Hannah offered her first smile on her second day home from the hospital. In response to the endless questions related to how we'd get Hannah in the car, we made a video to demonstrate our approach. I still

laugh at Adam's unshaven, bleary-eyed performance after our first few sleepless nights. We did, and still do want there to be more information for prospective parents with disabilities. But we're also constantly fighting the temptation to do whatever it takes to stop other people's doubts.

Some doubts represent such ignorance that we can't



help but laugh. We recently welcomed a new neighbor to our complex by introducing ourselves to him and his children. After we introduced Hannah, he cocked his head and asked, "So she's your daughter?" Affirmative. "And she lives here? ... with you?" In his typical response to further leave people befuddled, Adam answered, "Well, sometimes she prefers to live out back with the geese. But usually, yep, she lives right here with us."

Other doubts are more hurtful. It's these that I fear will be the most difficult for Hannah. A few weeks after her birth, we took Hannah to a wedding. It would be her first chance to meet several people close to us, and we were so proud. My anxiety peaked, though,

as I had to rely on others to help push her stroller through the grass at the outdoor reception. Not yet skilled at stating my boundaries for her, I experienced the edginess of motherhood when others walk out of your sight with your child. It had already been a challenging evening when a little girl tugged on my arm. Shaking her head, she said, "We just can't believe she's not disordered, ya know?" Confused because I knew she had no way of knowing Hannah's disability status, I asked, "What do you mean?" Matter of factly the child said, "Well, because she comes from a disordered family."

Prior to Hannah's birth, I might have felt that education and awareness is all that's needed to remedy such ignorance. My focus now is on the hope that I can at least partially immunize Hannah from some outsiders' belief that our family is anything but the strong and loving one that I know it is. I left that wedding with more gifts than the bride and groom received. I'd learned the need to be more assertive, the challenge to be flexible, and the call for courage that I would need to answer henceforth with pride.

Looking Forward

We will not allow Hannah's childhood to become a battle to prove other people wrong. Once one question is answered, doubters will always have others. "But how will you ever get her

in and out of the car?" quickly became, "What will you do when she's too big for your lap?" And that has since matured into, "What in the world are you going to do when she crawls?" We're as prepared — and at the same time completely surprised by each new phase of growth — as any other set of new parents. I've wiped the phrase, "I can't wait for her to ..." from my vocabulary because I can and I want to relish each of her milestones. Each brings a new challenge, but each has also introduced welcome benefits.

She is heavier now, but her stronger muscle tone allows her to help more when I lift her. She rides on our laps perfectly sandwiched between our legs. Our family learns together. Hannah's already shown an interest in standing. She'll soon be taught to walk by two people who don't! And yes, we're preparing for that, too.

Some people are impressively creative with the lengths they will go to in thinking of something, anything, that we simply will not be able to do for or with Hannah. So far, I've confirmed for interested others that no, I likely will not

be able to spot her as she learns to do a back



handspring, and no, we can't carry her to the top of those bouncy slides at fairs. I have faith she'll be all right with that.

With our genes, Hannah has inherited an amazing gift. She's already a loved member of the disability community. We are a family with a disability. The very things that some people question already bring Hannah a sense of peace. When she's upset, she likes nothing better than to be pushed around in one of our chairs. It's what she felt in my womb, and it's her normal. She has no idea that most parents are not able to join their babies in the crib while they enjoy a late night bottle. The side door to her crib is the perfect size for us! We climb in, feed her, and sneak out as she drifts back to sleep.

We're also becoming adept stroller drivers. Adam has mastered guiding the stroller, his wheelchair, and our two dogs for a roll. To credit those that tend to stare, I'll admit that these strolls around the block are quite a sight! A trip to the mall is equally interesting to many people, though. Pushing behind Adam, who's pushing the stroller, I've nearly lost my life to the incredibly large walking people who have their heads completely turned, walking aimlessly in a trance. I'm always on the lookout for the characteristic able-bodied sideways shuffle, but I've nearly been tripped over more times than I can count since Hannah

has joined us. We've also had to fend off more than one well-intentioned stranger who has grabbed her stroller because they "just want to help." I actively work to quiet the tempting urge to stay in, avoid others, and enjoy our family within our cozy, adapted and safe home. Hannah's here to see the world, and we'll make sure she has that opportunity.

What I'd somehow like to convey to those "interested others" is how I'm not embarrassed to say that there are many things our family does better because of our disability. We work together, we communicate and we parent interdependently. Hannah's body image will be shaped through the lens of pride, not peer pressure or cultural bias. We're creative, adaptive, and we see both the humor and the beauty in the imperfections of life. Adam and I can't wait for Hannah to attend her first disability conference. We're desperately searching for inclusive play programs, and she enjoys most Saturday mornings watching her daddy and other friends play wheelchair football.

Disability is not the central aspect of our family. Our family is built on a sturdy foundation of love and pride. It's not a pride that any of us were born with. As one of our family's late heroines, Laura Hershey, wrote, "You get proud by practicing." Our years of preparation for Hannah will be followed by years and years of love — and being proud.



Full Day Kindergarten Underway as of September 2011 © February 9, 2011; Ministry of Education

McGuinty Government Giving More Children A Stronger Start In School

Parents of about 50,000 four- and five-year-olds across the province are now registering their children for their very first day of school - in full-day kindergarten.

Starting in September 2011, full-day kindergarten will be offered in almost 800 Ontario schools. This will mark the second year for the full-day program, which focuses on giving our youngest learners the best possible start and provides a solid foundation for future learning. The program will be available at all schools province-wide by 2015. Students will benefit from a classroom with both an early childhood educator and a teacher, who work together throughout the day to help children learn, play and grow.

Full-day kindergarten is the next phase of the [Open Ontario Plan](#).

A full day of learning early in life makes the transition to Grade 1 easier for both parents and children. Also, students who achieve early success in school are more likely to perform well later in school and go on to postsecondary education.



QUICK FACTS:

- Registration for full-day and part-time kindergarten programs is already taking place at many elementary schools. Contact your local school board for details about registration in your community.
- Like existing kindergarten programs, full-day kindergarten will remain optional for four- and five-year-olds.
- To register for kindergarten, most boards require your child's identification documents, including birth certificate, birth registry/ baptismal certificate, Ontario Health Card and immunization record. Where there is sufficient parent demand, schools will also offer an optional before- and after-school program.

WHAT WILL MY CHILD LEARN AND DO?

Full-day kindergarten is the next step in our plan to help our kids get a better education in kindergarten through Grade 3. It helps kids get the best possible start. We're helping make things better for students from their first day of school to their last - and every day in between. Full-day kindergarten provides four- and five-year-olds with a seamless and integrated day that includes:

- An engaging, play-based educational program during the regular school day.
- Integrated programs before and after school hours designed to complement the regular school day. These are optional and are offered to parents for a reasonable fee. Subsidies will be available for some families based on need. Boards are not required to offer the before- and after-school programs if there is not enough demand.

WHO IS WORKING IN THE CLASSROOM?

- Teachers and early childhood educators (ECEs) are working together to help young students learn during the regular school day. These educators have complementary skills that create a learning

environment to support the unique needs of each child. With two qualified professionals in the classroom for the full school day, there is more time for individual and small group instruction.

- At schools that offer the integrated before- and after-school program, two ECEs work in the full-day kindergarten classroom. For example, one may run the before-school program and work in the classroom with the teacher during the morning and the second may arrive around lunchtime and work with the teacher in the afternoon and run the after-school program.
- The hours of the programs may differ based on your local school's schedule. At schools that don't offer the before- and after-school program, a single ECE works alongside the teacher during the regular school day (i.e. 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.)



WHAT HAPPENS BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL?

- The integrated before- and after-school program provides children with more opportunities to learn and grow and provides a seamless day with fewer transitions for children and families.

- It has been available in some full-day kindergarten schools during the 2010-11 school year. Boards are not required to offer the before- and after-school programs if there is not enough demand.
- It is offered from about 7:00 to 9:00 a.m. and 3:30 to 6:00 p.m. although the exact time for this program may vary at different schools. Parents can choose to enroll their child in the before-school, the after-school or both programs, or not at all.
- Some schools may offer before- and after-school programs run by a third party child care provider, and some schools may offer programs for older children as well. Ask your school or school board for more information about what programs are available locally.

ENGAGING ACTIVITIES

- The integrated before- and after-school complements what happens during the regular school day.
- Registered early childhood educators are responsible for the before- and after-school programs. They plan a play-based program that is connected to the learning that will happen during the regular school day. The program includes a mix of exploration, guided and independent activities, quiet times and

outdoor play.

There will be, at most, a ratio of one early childhood educator for every 15 children. If there are more than 15 children enrolled in the before- and after-school program, a second adult will support the early childhood educator. The second adult may receive additional training to work in the program, but he or she is not required to be a registered early childhood educator.

REASONABLE FEES AND SUBSIDIES

- Parents pay a reasonable fee to enrol their child in the before- and after-school care. Boards determine fees locally and approve them annually during a public meeting.
- In addition, subsidies are available to some families, based on financial need. The process is similar to applying for other child care subsidies.

BEFORE- AND AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

At some school boards, some or all of schools offering full-day kindergarten during the 2010-11 school year are offering integrated before- and after-school programs. Some schools may also be offering programs for older children or offering programs during school breaks or on professional

development (PD) days. Contact the school board or your local school for more information.

WHY SHOULD I ENROL MY CHILD?

- **A stronger start in school:** A full day of learning early in life can help improve your child's reading, writing and math skills and provide a strong foundation for future learning. It also makes the transition to Grade 1 easier for both you and your child. When the introduction to school is an enjoyable experience, your child is naturally inclined to learn and will be eager to be part of the school experience.
- **More time with classmates.** During the regular school day, your child will benefit from being able to socialize with other children and develop the academic and social skills necessary for future success. In addition, the program running before and after school hours will complement what your child learns and does during the regular school day.
- **A seamless and integrated day.** Your child will remain in familiar surroundings with staff and friends, rather than moving between different programs and locations.



New report: Almost 900,000 children in Canada are missing out on educational grants

© December 1, 2010; May Wong, OMEGA Foundation

TORONTO, ON, December 1, 2010:

Low-income families do not know that they can receive a grant from the federal government for their child's education, reveals a report published by Maytree, written by May Wong, Executive Director of the OMEGA Foundation.

Getting an RESP (Registered Education Savings Plan) is often the first step in saving for a child's education. It is also the only way that low-income families can receive the Canada Learning Bond, which provides up to \$2,000 without any parental contributions. Almost 900,000 children across Canada who would be eligible are not receiving it. In Ontario alone, 340,000 children are missing out. Most low-income families are not aware that the Bond exists, and there is little information in places where they could easily find it, such as schools, community organizations and libraries.

"Parents are confused and service providers are often not sure how to advise them," said May Wong, designer of the SmartSAVER project which mobilizes

a range of partners to make RESPs more accessible. "What's clear, though, is that parents from low-income families place a high priority on education and want to help their children succeed in school."

Studies have shown that children with savings get higher grades and are more likely to pursue post-secondary education. Education savings, especially started early in children's lives, can encourage children in low-income families to want to pursue post-secondary education and to put extra effort into their school work.

The report, "More than Money: Mining the human and financial potential of Canada's education savings programs for low-income families" lists eight recommendations. The first four recommendations are for organizations serving low-income families to provide families with accurate RESP information in their own communities and languages. The final four are for government to make it easier for low-income families to start an RESP that suits their needs.

Implementing the recommendations would increase access to education for those low-income students who are currently underrepresented in post-secondary education. For an individual, higher education means better jobs, higher wages and better employment security. For society, the gain is

increased productivity, increased tax revenues, and savings of billions of dollars due to avoided social and health costs attributed to low educational attainment. In addition, learning about and using education savings programs can improve the financial literacy of low-income parents, further strengthening financial resilience.

For more information and a copy of the report, visit www.maytree.com/policy-papers/more-than-money.html.

March Break on the Cheap

© February 10, 2011; Jeff Cottrill & Erica Salyi-Pannozzo;
<http://www.toronto.com/guide/marchbreak/article/649386>

Not every family has the budget to take in the bigger Toronto attractions (like the CN Tower or the Science Centre) during March Break. That doesn't mean the kids have to stay home. The city provides many affordable alternatives to keep the tykes entertained on their time off.

Parks and neighbourhoods: If the weather's nice, bring the children to one of the city's many large parks: [High Park](#), [Trinity Bellwoods](#), [Kay Gardner Beltline](#) and [Humber Bay Park](#) are just a few examples. You can bike through the [Don Valley](#) or hike through a walking trail. Explore one of Toronto's many diverse cultural neighbourhoods -- Chinatown, Little

Italy or the Distillery District -- or even your own.

Animals:

Take a trip to the [free zoo at High Park](#) instead of the Toronto Zoo. The paddocks in the park have been housing numerous animals for more than a hundred years. Today, families can see fallow deer, peacocks, bison, emus, yaks, llamas and exotic species such as capybaras and wallabies. Or give the kids a different kind of animal-viewing experience at [Riverdale Farm](#). This real farm in Cabbagetown parkland has free admission and is home to donkeys, pigs, fowl, rabbits and more. Kids can meet farmers as they milk the cows or feed the horses. Preschoolers can enjoy puzzles, books and games in the Meeting House playroom.

Historical sites and museums:

Reasonably priced historical sites are aplenty, so you can have a little fun while learning about the local past. Downtown, check out [Fort York](#), a War of 1812 battleground, or [Mackenzie House](#), the home of our first mayor. In the west, visit [Montgomery's Inn](#), which is connected to the 1837 Rebellion, or [Colborne Lodge](#), a restored 19th-century house in High Park. There's also [Gibson House Museum](#) and [Todmorden Mills](#) in North York,



and [Scarborough Historical Museum](#) in the east. Don't rule out the [Art Gallery of Ontario](#) and [Royal Ontario Museum](#). The AGO's permanent collections are free on Wednesdays between 6 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. Plus, Ontario high-school students with valid ID get in free between 3 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. from Tuesday to Friday. Meanwhile, the ROM has free admission on Wednesdays between 3:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m., with half-price admission on Fridays starting at 4:30 p.m.

Sports: A good alternative to a Leafs game is catching the [Marlies](#) at [Ricoch Coliseum](#). The Marlies play March 12, 13 and 19 during March Break week.

Library events: The [Toronto Public Library](#) is rife with events and activities over March Break. This year's activities include Afternoon at the Movies, Bob the Magician and Music With Brian.

Horticulture: If your kids have an appreciation for horticulture and floral beauty, another possibility is the annual [Canada Blooms](#) festival, the nation's largest flower and garden festival. While adult tickets are \$16, children under 12 years old get in for free. There's also the [Allan Gardens Conservatory](#), which is free for everybody.



Food

As far as meals are concerned, you're best off cooking at home if you want to save money. But in case you and the kids get the itch to eat out sometime, there are numerous options (other than Mickey D's) for [cheap, family-friendly eats](#).

GET INVOLVED

PARTICIPANTS WANTED FOR DOCUMENTARY ABOUT ATTENDANT SERVICES

If you use or provide attendant services/attendant care, and you are interested in being in a short educational film about your experiences, we'd like to connect with you.

The film is part of a Trillium-funded project designed to improve the health, safety, and satisfaction of both attendants and people using attendant services. The video is about providing information about working relationships between attendant and person using attendant services as it relates to sexuality.

We're interested in connecting with anyone, regardless of how you receive or provide services, whether you think you have experience with this subject matter or not.

If you are curious about our project or interested in finding out more about us, about the film, and about what participating in this video would be like you can contact us directly. We can do this on the phone, via email, or whatever way works for you.

Participants in the film will be paid for their time.

For more information please contact Fran Odette at:

Springtide Resources
Tel: 416-968-3422, ext. 30
email: f.odette@gmail.com

or check out our facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Sexuality-and-Access-Project/209732079137>



RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

A Study About Ethno-Racial Mothers With Disabilities

RYERSON UNIVERSITY

School of Social Work

- Are you from Ethno-Racial background?
- Are you a person with physical or sensory disabilities?
- Do you have a child or children under the age of 18?
- Would you like to share your story with others?

Who is doing this study: The researcher is Bahja Nassir. I am a Masters of Social Work student at Ryerson University, and I am doing this research as a requirement for my Masters of Social Work studies.

What I hope to accomplish: This research will gather the stories of ethno-racial mothers with physical or sensory disabilities, who have a child

or children under the age of 18. I want to learn about your experiences of becoming a mother as well as your

experiences of motherhood. I hope that what I learn in this study will contribute to existing knowledge and in the long run will result in policy recommendations that will enhance services and support for ethno-racial mothers with disabilities. Through telling the stories of ethno-racial mothers with disabilities, I hope that some of the existing negative stereotypes surrounding "ethno-racial women with disabilities" and "sexuality" will be challenged.

What I am asking you to do: I want to talk to you for an hour and a half, but it could be shorter or longer, to hear your story about your parenting experiences as a racialized mother with disabilities.

What I will provide: I will provide an honorarium of \$15 for participating in the interview. I will also provide TTC tokens.

For further information, please contact: Bahja Nassir at bnassir@ryerson.ca.

Participation in this study is voluntary and will have no impact on your relationship with Ryerson University, ERDCO, CNIB, CILT, CCD, or ACBE.



IN THE COMMUNITY...

About PRESTO

The Government of Ontario, GO Transit and nine municipal transit partners in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area and in Ottawa, have come together to design, develop and implement a seamless regional transit fare card system.

Using contactless (“Smartcard”) technology, PRESTO will allow customers to ride on any participating transit system without pre-purchasing tickets or having to search for the correct change. The PRESTO card, which is the size of a debit card, will use “stored-value” in the form of a common electronic purse (e-Purse) for all fare payment transactions.

Customers can tap their PRESTO card as they board a bus or enter a station and the system deducts the fare from their card balance, all within one-eighth of a second. GO Transit customers must tap off at the end of their trip, unless they have set a default trip.

Customers can load their cards online or at GO Transit and municipal customer service outlets (excluding TTC). Registered cardholders can set

up their account to automatically add value to their card using our Autoload feature.

Customers who choose to register their cards will be able to replace the value on a lost or stolen card.

PRESTO Participants include:

- GO Transit
- Brampton Transit
- Burlington Transit
- Durham Region Transit
- Hamilton Street Railway
- Mississauga Transit
- Oakville Transit
- Ottawa OC Transpo
- TTC
- York Region Transit

For more information, visit www.prestocard.ca.



Breaking the Ice Canada Conference

The *Breaking the Ice (BTI) Canada* conference is an event created by and for individuals who use Augmentative and Alternative Communication and their families. This conference is the only event of its kind in Canada and was designed to bring the community of people who use AAC together to share ideas and learn more from each other to "break the ice". BTI Canada is a consumer-centered conference designed for augmented communicators. The conference has proven to be a powerful force for change and a source of empowerment for an often marginalized group.

The conference is taking place June 3rd to the 5th, 2011 at the University of Toronto Residence, 89 Chestnut Street, Toronto.

Who is it for? This conference is focused on topics of interest for people who use AAC:

- Adults and teens who use AAC
- Parents of young AAC Users, who may benefit from meeting other parents and AAC presenters sharing their own experiences
- Professionals in the field of AAC
- Family members and friends of those who use AAC.

If you would like to attend the *Breaking the Ice* conference, you may register online at www.breakingtheiceconference.ca.

The Ann Running Kindle (ARK) Award Sponsored by the Breaking the Ice Conference and North Yorkers for Disabled Persons

Ann Running was a woman with a complex communication disorder who relied on Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) to interact with those around her. She was a strong advocate for AAC users and a leader in her community. In March 2010 Ann passed away, after residing at North Yorkers for Disabled Persons (NYDP) for 25 years. One of Ann's great joys in the last year of her life was the use of a Kindle e-reader. It gave her unlimited access to reading and the inspiration to start a book club. In her honour, NYDP and the Breaking the ICE (BTI) Conference organizing committee would like to recognize Ann's spirit and dedication to lifelong learning and advocacy by awarding a **Kindle e-reader** to an AAC user who is a role model and advocate for AAC within his/her own community.

At the upcoming BTI Conference, an AAC User will be recognized for accomplishments that embody those attributes Ann exemplified. These accomplishments might include:

- Educating people about what life is like as an AAC User.
- Developing initiatives in their community around learning, literacy, and education.
- Advocating for those who rely on AAC for communication.
- Providing leadership (on committees, Boards of Directors, etc) representing the experiences of an AAC user.
- Belonging to a network, club or organization that makes positive change for the people/causes it supports.

If you believe that you or someone you know should be nominated for the ARK Award for 2011, please complete the form below. Entries must be received by **March 30th, 2011**. All entries will be reviewed by a selection committee consisting of one member of the organizing committee of the BTI Conference, Miriam Running, mother of Ann Running and a Board member from North Yorkers for Disabled Persons.

The ANN RUNNING KINDLE (ARK) Award

Nominee: _____

Nominator's Name: _____

Nominator's address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email address: _____

Date of entry: _____

Briefly describe (300 words or less) the reason for this nomination, including the significance of the individual's relevant accomplishments, their impact in their community or the larger world, and the ways in which they demonstrate the attributes of the ARK award. If you wish, you can attach additional materials to your entry, such as a story, letter or poem.

Please submit your application to:

Recreation Department
March of Dimes Canada
10 Overlea Blvd.,
Toronto, ON M4H 1A4

www.marchofdimes.ca

Fax: 416-425-1920

e-mail: recreation@marchofdimes.ca



RESOURCES



HAVE DIFFICULTY READING PRINT? Free access to audio books, newspapers and information

If you have problems reading print, it doesn't have to stop you from reading! With the CNIB Library Partners Program, you can read what you want, how you want, when you want.

Want to check out the CNIB Library?

Watch a video

http://www.cnib.ca/en/services/library/Documents/CDL_Demo_EN.wmv

Listen to an audio introduction

http://www.cnib.ca/en/services/library/Documents/Introduction_to_CNIB_Library_Services.mp3

What does the CNIB Library offer? More than 80,000 titles in audio, e-text, braille and e-braille for all ages and interests. Visit www.cnib.ca/cdl to see what we have for you.

This program is available thanks to funding from the provincial governments of Alberta, Ontario, New

Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.



Interested? All you need is a public library card. Getting a library card is fast and easy. Just contact your local library.

Where is your local library?

Look online:

Alberta: http://www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/mc_public_library_directory.cfm

Ontario: <http://www.culture.gov.on.ca/english/library/oplweb.htm>

PEI: <http://www.library.pe.ca/index.php3?number=1031199>

New Brunswick: <http://www.gnb.ca/0003/region-e.asp>

Register today at www.cnib.ca/selfregistration.





THE CLASSIFIEDS

Please remember to share with us any used childcare equipment that you would like to get rid of and we can advertise it for you right here. To place a free ad call 416-599-2458, ext. 227.

PARENTING WITH A DISABILITY BULLETIN is a publication of the *Centre for Independent Living in Toronto (CILT) Inc.*

To become a member of the *Parenting with a Disability Network (PDN)* or to submit an article to the PARENTING BULLETIN, contact *CILT* at:

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Toronto, Ontario M4W 3L4

Tel: 416-599-2458, x227

Fax: 416-599-3555

TTY: 416-599-5077

E-mail: peers@cilt.ca

Website: www.cilt.ca

The PARENTING BULLETIN is also available in large print, on audiotape or in Braille.

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