

# PDD South Region Newsletter Summer 2008



## PDD South Reviews Focus Group Summary – Part 1

Through the spring of 2008, PDD South Region commissioned board member Tom Hopkins to conduct a series of focus groups on Community Inclusion with the idea of gathering a significant amount of information on objectives and concerns which would be unique to the South. "Our intention was to create a series of open forums for discussion of perceived *wants and needs*, as seen from the perspectives of multiple stakeholder groups from across the region."

The target groups were identified as: self-advocates, families, service providers & CEO's, agency frontline staff, and PDD staff.

Each of the sessions asked the following:

What do the individuals we serve want and need? (asked of all groups)

What do families want and need? (asked of families, service providers and PDD staff)

In order to give participants a framework to think about the questions of *wants and needs* as they relate to individual and family circumstances, Tom had the participants consider the terms in eight categories using a Wheel of Life concept which covers all aspects of daily living.

### Wheel of Life Framework

- home
- work
- recreation
- spiritual
- relationship
- supports
- transportation
- education

"What are your *wants and needs* in each of these areas?" The answers came back with unexpected clarity and consideration, and ranged from those imminently practical - more money or a more accessible house, to universally intangible issues of love, friendship and belonging.

After spending some time in thinking and discussion (each session ran approximately 3 hours) the raw data was gathered, sorted for common themes, and then prioritized according to which demonstrated the majority of support.

"The self advocates group was, for me, amazing in terms of clarity and integrity of the responses," Tom comments. "They put themselves completely into the process, and were so excited that somebody asked them, *really* asked them, what they wanted, not couched in a preexisting assumption, or reinterpreted. And they really liked it that we came back and talked with them about the summaries, shared the priorities of the group as a whole, and that they were able to see and hear the range of perspectives."

Watch for more updates on the *wants and needs* facilitation in future issues of the newsletter.

**PDD South has a responsibility to promote and encourage a culture among its partners that stimulates innovation and healthy risk taking which creates more interdependence and independence wherever possible.**

## Medicine Hat Youth Honoured with Leaders of Tomorrow Award

Local resident Kristopher Kulpe was chosen, along with six others, by the City of Medicine Hat to be recognized with the Leaders of Tomorrow award for his commitment to community involvement and volunteerism. The City has coordinated this annual award acknowledging youth since 1997.

Kristopher was nominated by the United Way of Southeastern Alberta staff because of his ongoing work there. Medicine Hat United Way Director Holly Beauchamp-Stadnicki describes Kris as "a social light for us... we love having him come in. He is so diligent, and willingly involves himself in necessary administrative tasks as well as participating in special events such as the Easter egg campaign and our Chili Cook Off. He knows so many people in the community, and acts as a social convener for our organization when we are hosting community events. I can't think of anyone more deserving for this recognition than Kris."



The United Way is not the only local organization to benefit from the generosity of time and goodwill that Kris demonstrates. Kris has volunteered extensively with Tourism Medicine Hat and the Medicine Hat Chamber of Commerce, both within their offices in support of staff and as an ambassador at numerous public events such as trade shows and the Alberta Tourism passport events. He also volunteers at the Good Samaritans senior's residence with their craft and music programs, and at Medalta Pottery where he helps out in the office and has even filled in to conduct a tour when staff was unavailable.



Wherever he goes, people know Kris as consistently cheerful, friendly and outgoing. Those traits have helped to open many doors for him, and he has made friends across the spectrum from Medicine Hat businesses, media and local sports teams. His friendly nature and willingness to meet new people have led to many memorable experiences ranging from meeting hockey and racing heroes to a brief on-stage conversation with Shania Twain during a concert.

Kris is open to continued learning and growth. Through opportunities such as taking part in a National Film Board project called Days to Minutes, he works to expand his horizons further and educate others about overcoming challenges. Despite his disability, Kris acts as a role model and continues to affect everyone around him with his infectious spirit and sense of limitless possibility. <http://www.nfb.ca/press-room/communique.php?id=14445>

Kris invites everyone to check on his website [www3.telus.net/kriskulpe](http://www3.telus.net/kriskulpe) to see more photos and information.

If you have any story ideas, suggestions or feedback on this newsletter, please contact Colette Acheson at [an.co@shaw.ca](mailto:an.co@shaw.ca) or by telephone at 393-2258

## Celebration Concert Brings Community Together

The rafters were ringing at Medicine Hat's Esplanade theatre when CORE Association presented its second annual Celebration Concert.

The afternoon event included singing, dancing and other entertainment, as well as an art sale and silent auction. Doug Cazes, The Adele Armstrong Singers Ron Mason & Friends, and a group of individuals from CORE's day program, provided the entertainment. Masters of Ceremony were Chris DeCoste and Les Pearson, who kept the show rolling.



Some amazing oil, watercolor and acrylic paintings, and pottery, created by individuals in the Step by Step Art Program were on display and sold during the event. Those viewing the displays were impressed with the quality of creativity and talent.

"This being our second year organizing the spring concert, we received an overwhelming response from the community," said CORE Association Executive Director Rita Bessant. "Local businesses readily contributed to the silent auction, local musicians were delighted to be involved, and everyone – participants and audience members – had a great time."

"It was truly a cultural event for our community with 360 people attending," she said, adding that a wine-and-cheese style reception provided an ideal way for the audience to meet and mingle with the entertainers.

A broad section of the community attended the concert, including guests Environment Minister and Medicine Hat MLA Rob Renner, Cypress-Medicine Hat MLA Len Mitzel, Mayor Norm Bouchard and several aldermen from the City of Medicine Hat, Sylvain Bellefeuille from the PDD South Board and representatives of various community organizations.

Bessant praised the individuals, staff and volunteers who made this year's event an even greater success than last year's. "The production was wonderful, a true celebration of the arts and a glowing example that individuals actually *'are the community'* and so much included in their community," said Bessant.

Plans are under way for next year's Celebration Concert.

## Upcoming Events

### PDD Board Meeting

- Sept 25<sup>th</sup>, 2008
- Brooks
- RSVP at 403-381-5777

PDD South Region CEO  
Leigh Bremner 381-5777

### SRSAN Meetings and Conferences

Sept 10th, 2008  
Call Heather or Judy  
at 320-1515 to confirm  
attendance or for more  
information about events

### LACL events

visit the website at  
[www.lacl.ca](http://www.lacl.ca)

### Family Voices

Call Tina Fowler at  
327-2911 for upcoming  
meeting dates & times

### Toastmasters

Wednesdays at Noon  
Lethbridge Rehabilitation  
Society

### morethanthelabel.com

Next business mentor  
workshop scheduled for  
Tuesday, Sept 30<sup>th</sup>

### Sharing Inspiring Ideas

Community Gathering  
Everyone welcome!  
Aug 28<sup>th</sup>, 2008  
Canadian Polish Hall  
Call Deanna at 329-3581

## Inclusive Communities Built by Linking Families

Family Voices is a province-wide network of Alberta families who meet monthly in each of six regions\* to discuss issues of concern and take part in advocacy and lobbying on behalf of children and adults with developmental disabilities. These Family Voices networks are working with school districts, with child and family services authorities, and with Persons with Developmental Disabilities Community Boards on behalf of children, adults and families affected by developmental disability.

In the south, Family Voices is coordinated by Tina Fowler based in the office of the Lethbridge Association for Community Living. "Our role is to help families connect with other families... for learning, sharing, support and advocacy, as well as to present a united voice over a particular issue at times. Even if it's a local concern, we can inform other families across the province about what's going on in different sectors." Regional coordinators like Tina keep families in touch through monthly meetings, regional and provincial conferences and teleconferences, and email communication.

As well as working within the family network, Family Voices works to teach and advocate in the larger community by representing the family position with schools and all levels of government. Across the south, Family Voices has been responsible for lobbying for and supporting implementation of increased choice in the ways families access existing programs in schools and with Family and Community Support Services.

Through the monthly meetings, parents can share their stories relating to the challenges and successes involved in raising a child with a developmental disability. As well, coordinators often arrange for presentations on issues of concern to families; previous groups have had opportunity to learn more about inclusive post-secondary education, specific disabilities such as Autism, FASD, and Down Syndrome, changes to legislation which affect funding and more.



For more information contact Tina Fowler by phone at 403-327-2911 or by email at [tfowler@lacl.ca](mailto:tfowler@lacl.ca)

\*Northwest, Northeast, Edmonton, Central, Calgary and South Region

## AISH Earnings Exemptions Increased

Albertans receiving assistance through the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) program can now earn more money and still remain eligible for financial assistance.

On July 1, the upper limit of the employment exemption formula increased by \$500 to \$1,500 per month for single AISH clients and to \$2,500 per month for couples and clients with children. More information about the changes is available online at <http://www.seniors.gov.ab.ca/aish/> or by calling the toll free provincial RITE line at 310-000 followed by the specific number.