
Improving Albertans' quality of life

October 19, 2007

Southern Albertans recognized for improving communities for people with developmental disabilities***Community Inclusion Award finalists from Brooks and Lethbridge, nominee from Taber***

Calgary... Individuals and organizations that promote the full participation of people with developmental disabilities in Alberta's communities were celebrated at the sixth annual Norm McLeod Community Inclusion Awards on October 19 in Calgary.

Dawn Stafford of Brooks and Brad Flaig of Lethbridge were finalists for the Leadership Award, which is presented to an individual with a developmental disability who inspires others through his or her achievements and demonstrates leadership in the community. Stafford uses a wheelchair and worked with the mayor on accessibility issues and, as a result, the city is improving street and sidewalk accessibility. Flaig is an active member of his church and community and is working towards full employment. He works at overcoming barriers and is dependable, reliable and conscientious.

Bea VanGeest of Taber was nominated for a Dreamweaver Award, which recognizes an individual dedicated to improving the quality of life for people with developmental disabilities and fostering values such as equity, integrity, dignity and respect. She makes a difference at the Taber Special Needs Society with regular visits, treats everyone with respect and takes time to ensure everyone can participate in activities.

A total of 26 nominations were received in the three categories. A third award is for Community Contribution, which recognizes an organization that has made efforts to improve the quality of life for people with developmental disabilities and recognizes that individuals can fully participate in their community.

Sharon Cobb of Calgary won the Dreamweaver Award. Mayor Stephen Mandel and Edmonton City Council received the Community Contribution Award. John Goede of High Prairie received the Leadership Award.

"It is important to recognize individuals who inspire us to ensure people with developmental disabilities are included in our communities," said Greg Melchin, Minister of Seniors and Community Supports responsible for the Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) program, which sponsors the awards. "These individuals are a credit to Alberta and help make our communities stronger."

The awards celebrate the work of Norm McLeod and his ongoing vision of people with developmental disabilities living as full participants in their communities. During his 35-year career in the disability field, Norm McLeod inspired those around him with his commitment to community inclusion.

The PDD program delivers residential, employment and community supports for approximately 9,100 adult Albertans with developmental disabilities.

Working with communities to provide quality services for persons with disabilities is part of Premier Ed

Stelmach's plan to improve Albertans' quality of life. Other priorities are to govern with integrity and transparency, manage growth pressures, build a stronger Alberta and provide safe and secure communities.

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Backgrounder: nominees' biographies

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Nominees for the Norm McLeod Community Inclusion Awards

Norm McLeod Community Inclusion Leadership Award

Lucas Batty - Peace River (Finalist)

Lucas has helped to change the way people in his community view individuals with developmental disabilities. He is an active and enthusiastic community participant. When Lucas isn't busy working at the SAAN store or volunteering with the Webberville Fire Department, he helps his neighbours with child care and running errands.

Francine Bérubé - Edmonton

Francine is the community liaison worker with Independent Counseling Enterprises. She supports and encourages everyone she comes in contact with and educates the public about people with developmental disabilities.

Murray Crosby - Calgary

Murray helps to create a higher acceptance of individuals with developmental disabilities. His work as a self-advocate on the Vibrant Communities Calgary *Fair Fares Action Team* helped make Calgary the first municipality in Alberta to implement a low-income transit pass program.

Brad Flaig - Lethbridge (Finalist)

Brad is an active member of his community, a tireless volunteer for his church, and an unofficial ambassador for people with developmental disabilities. As he works towards full employment, Brad volunteers in his community from organizing a float for the community's parade to helping prepare the church newsletter. He works at overcoming barriers and is dependable, reliable and conscientious.

John Goede - High Prairie (Winner)

John is a graduate of the Leadership Today program who is involved in the advocacy group he started. He is respected and well-known in his community and works several jobs.

Anora Nelson - Calgary

Anora welcomes opportunities with eagerness and optimism. She looks at the funny side of every situation and is involved with a comedy club through a community access program she attends. She greets everyone she knows with a smile and sometimes tells jokes using her Springboard augmentative communications device.

Kayla Powell - Calgary

Kayla is a bright, articulate and engaging worker at the Extendicare Calgary long-term care facility. Kayla takes care of plants, including watering, repotting and trimming. While working, she takes time to talk with the seniors, their families and staff.

Dawn Stafford - Brooks (Finalist)

Dawn attended Medicine Hat College (Brooks Campus) to earn a high school diploma. She uses a wheelchair, and in October 2006 she extended an invitation to the mayor of Brooks to travel around town with her. He soon saw the difficulties Dawn and others face every day. As a result, the city is improving street and sidewalk accessibility.

Norm McLeod Community Inclusion Dreamweaver Award

Sherry Albrecht - Red Deer (Finalist)

Sherry inspires those she works with at the Red Deer Catholic Social Services where she is the community inclusion coordinator. Her enthusiasm for fostering understanding led to the development of the new community inclusion program, which helps individuals with developmental disabilities access community resources and supports.

Dr. Gerald Archibald - Spruce Grove

Jerry, a former chair of the PDD Edmonton Community Board, continues to advocate for individuals with developmental disabilities. His influence, credibility, and respect for individuals with developmental disabilities extend beyond the PDD board. In public and private, he exemplifies community inclusion.

Sharon Cobb - Calgary (Winner)

Sharon has set a new standard of excellence for working to improve the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities. Her work with Calgary Region Family Voices and the Alberta Association for Community Living inspires others to become involved in promoting community inclusion.

Deborah Foster - St. Albert

Deborah is head coach of the Edmonton Special Olympics swim program, which has athletes who participate in provincial and national summer games. She is actively involved in all aspects of the athletes' lives and also acts as a counselor and dietary consultant.

Kelly Gurtin - Calgary

Kelly managed a computability program, a volunteer-driven program that assists persons with disabilities with computer literacy. Kelly did this with a positive outlook and constant encouragement. She helped her clients build self-esteem and is an excellent role model. She has recently been promoted to Director of Operations for the Calgary office of the Ability Society.

Sandra Mak - Edmonton (Finalist)

Sandra is Executive Director of Leadership Today Society of Alberta. Through training, people with developmental disabilities learn skills that help them gain confidence, a sense of who they are, and a direction. Her encouragement has helped graduates speak out more and become active members of their communities.

David Murphy - Red Deer (Finalist)

David recognizes the importance of community inclusion. As a managing partner of a Tony Roma's restaurant, he employs individuals with developmental disabilities and gives them the opportunity to learn new skills. Many employees have remained for years because of Dave's constant support, compassion, and encouragement.

Orvella Small - High River

Orvella has developed innovative ways to improve the quality of life for individuals with developmental disabilities. Her work with the Foothills Special Needs Association for Parents and Siblings, and the Alberta Home and School Association, motivates others to embrace the inclusion of individuals with developmental disabilities.

Bea VanGeest - Taber

Bea makes a difference at the Taber Special Needs Society with regular visits. Bea is genuinely interested in others and inquires about their lives. She also remembers important events and stories told by the people she meets.

Norm McLeod Community Contribution Award

Alberta AdaptAbilities Association - Edmonton

The association provides respite programs and services for children, teens and young adults with

developmental disabilities, including an out-of-school program for children 12 and older, weekly teen nights, drop-in respite and Hearts in Action day camps. The association also helps participants gain work experience through placements at their centre and head office.

Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities (ACCD) - Edmonton

The Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities is a consumer-directed organization that actively promotes full participation in society for Albertans with disabilities. ACCD has been in existence since 1973 and operates under the principles of full participation, equity, and accessibility.

Calgary Public Library Diversity Services - Calgary

The library offers a range of services to people with various disabilities, including large print books, adaptive technology workstations, descriptive videos and talking books. The library opened Diversity Services in 2004 and works with many community groups to network with teachers, community services and parent advocacy groups to improve services and promote programs.

Church of the Nazarene – Wainwright (Finalist)

The church works with its members to help individuals with developmental disabilities become involved in activities, celebrations, and classes. Several members have developmental disabilities and have helped others become more aware of community inclusion.

The Girl Guides - Olds (Finalist)

The Girl Guides demonstrate dignity and respect for all its members, including a young woman with a developmental disability who has become district leader. They have a positive and inclusive environment, which has helped this young woman gain confidence and become a leader in her community.

Mayor Stephen Mandel and Edmonton City Council – Edmonton (Winner)

The mayor and council have led initiatives for people with developmental disabilities to experience greater community inclusion such as discounted bus passes and free access to recreational facilities. They actively promote community inclusion at City Hall by ensuring alternate communications technologies are available and make efforts to recognize the accomplishments of individuals with developmental disabilities.

Mount Royal College, Inclusive Post-secondary Education - Calgary (Finalist)

The college recognizes that individuals with developmental disabilities can fully participate in campus life, including attending regular classes, joining student clubs and associations, and participating in recreational activities.

Parent Advocates Linking Special Services (PALSS) - Fort Saskatchewan

PALSS has been building awareness of educational and recreational needs of children and families in their community for 10 years. Operated by three mothers of children with disabilities, they arrange events, fundraise for learning material and adaptive equipment, and build awareness of the importance of including people with disabilities in the community.

Starbucks Coffee Canada - Calgary

Starbucks employs individuals with developmental disabilities in their 15 Calgary locations. As a partner with Prospect Services, an initiative to increase diversity in the workplace, Starbucks recently received an *Employer of Persons with Disabilities Award of Distinction* from the Alberta Chamber of Commerce.

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