

## FEATURED STORY

### Connected Families Forum A Huge Success

*By Sarah Winter and Don Murray*

On Saturday October 25<sup>th</sup>, Connect**ABILITY**.ca hosted the Connected Families Forum at the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre. The day was a huge success featuring speakers, a live panel discussion, trade show and Family Café.

There were updates on several innovative programs; Frances MacNeil, Central Region's Executive Director presented on "Steps to Independence" and "LIGHTS —Exploring Options Beyond Traditional Supports". Meanwhile Sarah Winter, Volunteer Services Coordinator provided an update on "FamilyLink" – a group for families supporting families at various stages of life

Self-Advocate Coordinator Sue Hutton helped set the mood for the day with a Mindfulness exercise to aid in reducing stress and maintaining overall well being. You can watch Sue's presentation "MINDFULNESS TRAINING – Caring for the caregivers! Mind, Body & Spirit" online at:  
<http://connectability.ca/2014/04/04/mindfulness-training-caring-for-the-caregivers-mind-body-spirit/>

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Shineeca McLeod moderated a powerful live panel on rights from the perspective of an adult with an intellectual disability. Brandon Pooran presented on Rights and the Law, which generated an exciting conversation among attendees. You can view all of the presentations on Connect**ABILITY**.ca:  
<http://connectability.ca/2014/11/06/rights/>

During the lunch break, participants had the opportunity to check out over 25 Community Participation Support (CPS) programs at the Fee for Service Trade Show. The listing of Fee for Service Programs and Educational Opportunities After High School can be found on the Resource Directories Page:  
<http://connectability.ca/resource-directories/>

After lunch, participants engaged in the Connected Families Café, where they had lively chats with other families and caregivers about issues that were important to them. At the end of each discussion, participants were asked to come up with the top three take away points from the discussion. You can read them and add your views to the discussion at <http://connectability.ca/connected-families/#/discussion/206/connected-families-forum>

Overall, the day was a massive success and thanks to all who attended and participated. Planning for future Connected Families events has already started. Stay tuned for more information.



*Connected Families Forum hosted a panel on rights of individuals with an intellectual disability.*

## CENTRAL REGION

# Dinner Club Celebrates Their Volunteers

*By Matt Poirier*



*Geoff surrounded by Dinner Club staff & attendees for his birthday.*

It's a snowy Wednesday evening and Pearl is hurriedly preparing jerk chicken for Central Region's Dinner Club at 30 Birch. Only this week, it's a special dinner. As Pearl does the cooking, some of the club attendees are blowing up balloons and hanging decorations for the birthday of one of the club's volunteers.

Geoff Poole has been volunteering at the Dinner Club for the past five years, and has even received Central Region's Volunteer of the Year award in 2013. Geoff's kindness and passion for volunteering with the club has earned him the respect and friendship of the participants who attend, and they wanted to show their appreciation.

Geoff just celebrated a milestone birthday, so Dinner Club threw him a surprise birthday party, complete with delicious food, cake and eggnog, gifts and party decorations! Despite

the cold winter weather, some of the club's most avid participants braved the snow to come out and wish one of their favorite volunteers a "Happy Birthday!" They realize how important Geoff's contributions are to the club, and it's important to celebrate the volunteers who make it all possible.

## ETOBICOKE REGION

# Letting The Art Do The Talking

By Eric Laimer



*Tracey proudly displays her favourite painting of a treehouse.*

When asked about her work, Tracey Killen is an artist of few words. "I like art," she said, "It gives me something to do." While Tracey doesn't elaborate much about her work, her cards and paintings do the talking. During our interview, she was working on a stunning painting of a church. Her attention to detail was impressive and her choice of bright, vibrant colours made for an eye catching piece of art.

Tracey has been coming to Creative Village Studio (CVS) for five years. She started out making gift cards. They have consistently sold well and are always in demand. So much so that three of her original cards were

professionally printed, an honour that only goes to the artists producing the best cards. Buyers seem to really like her choice of images for her cards. Tracy prefers animal images or caricatures of animals in her work.

While she was at first a bit shy to try something different, Tracey took up painting two years ago with the encouragement of CVS supervisor Harold Tomlinson. Since then, she has produced some really great work. Switching over to painting also gave Tracey the opportunity to show her work at the many art shows that CVS gets involved with throughout the year.

A few of her paintings are being featured at the "From Our Perspective" art show that taking place December 4 to January 21 at the Etobicoke Civic Centre Art Gallery. This will mark the second anniversary of the art show that originally began as a partnership between City of Toronto- Parks, Forestry and Recreation (CTPFR) and CVS. Last year, Harold Tomlinson, Lindsay Mogford, CTPFR Community Recreation Programmer, and other staff combined efforts to create a milestone exhibition that featured the painting, photography and knitting of forty CVS artists. Over one hundred pieces were on display, which made it one of the largest Creative Village Studio art shows ever. While this year's exhibition will be a smaller affair, it will feature paintings and photos from over 25 CVS artists. Tracey's favourite painting of a tree house will be on display along with some of her other paintings.

CVS has developed many great artists over the years. If you have ever wanted to become an artist, now is a great time to connect. Programs in scrapbooking, choral music, abstract painting and card making are starting up again in January 2015. For more information, or to register for programs, contact Creative Village Studio at [647-351-4362](tel:647-351-4362).

## NORTH YORK REGION

# Big Dreams Art Company Earns Amazing Support

By Wendy Dyke



*Big Dreams on display at Community Rocks 2014.*

Each year, the North York Employment Training Services (ETS) holds two major Art Show and Sales to promote the products produced by their Big Dreams Art Company. One is held in the spring, just in time for Mother's Day and the other in November just as holiday season shopping starts. They also take opportunities to reach out to the community at our Volunteer Appreciation Dinner each April and participate in Community Rocks every other year in November. You can also find the Big Dreams Arts Company every Friday at the St. Lawrence Market. Participants create lovely paintings, jewelry, knitted items, painted plant pots, mosaic art work and greeting cards which they sell to the general public.

On November 12, their annual holiday art show held at the ETS went extremely well. Their customers included individuals in service from other regions, local neighbours, staff, and family members of participants. While the

morning focused mainly on sales, the afternoon events included a fashion show where some of the participants walked down the runway wearing beautiful jewelry made by the artists. The show generated over \$520.00 in sales.

Big Dreams Art Company was also showcased at Community Rocks in November. Customers were very impressed with the art work available which included paintings, jewelry and knitted items. The proceeds for the evening amounted to almost \$900.00. The Big Dreams Arts Company artists are so very thankful to everyone who came out to support them at these two events.

Please watch the upcoming events session of the newsletter for more opportunities to support the North York ETS' Big Dreams Arts Company.

## SCARBOROUGH REGION

# Warden Woods Celebrates Staff Service

By Shawn Ratnasingam

The first Employment Training Services opened in September 1957 with a purpose to give adults with an intellectual disability the opportunity to work in a supported work setting in the company of their own peers. At the time, it was known as ARC Industries. In 1993, the name was changed to Employment Training Services (ETS). ETS- Warden Woods has always been the largest ARC/ETS site supported

In 2004, an idea was brought forward about individuals being recognized for their years of service contribution to the ETS. Since then, the Service Awards recognition has become an

annual custom recognizing individuals for their hard work. This year, the highest years of service award went to Gary McCauley for 35 years. Next year, Beverly Littlewood will be receiving her 50 years of service award.

As I was talking to a few award recipients, the overall message that came across linked the dots between individual roles and the goals of the organization. I asked the question why do you like coming here; “This is my job”, “I have made lots of friends”, “Staff like me”, “I make money and have fun” were some of the answers. When people see the connection, they get a lot of energy out of work. They feel the importance, dignity, and meaning in their job with the support of the staff at Warden Woods ETS.



Warden Woods individuals receive their service awards

## In Memory: Patricia Sparks

Patricia Sparks passed away on November 10, 2014. Patricia was a retired elementary teacher of students in ESL and Special Education. She was the recipient of a Canada 125 Medal, City of Scarborough Volunteer Award and several awards from Community Living Toronto for her outstanding dedication to her numerous volunteer activities. She was involved in Scarborough Council for over 40 years, including as Chair for a number of those years.

Her contribution to Council played a pivotal role in the strength of membership numbers in Scarborough region and she was instrumental in many of the region’s fundraisers as well. Pat introduced and passionately supported Scarborough’s literacy programs along with the travel training and adult drop in programs. Pat, along with her husband Bill, was chosen as a recipient of the Association’s Jim Turner Volunteer of the Year Award in 2012-2013. Pat, who has left behind quite a legacy, will be greatly missed by many.



Bill & Pat Sparks receiving the Jim Turner Award for Outstanding Voluntarism.

## SAC UPDATE

### The SAC Learns About Ontario’s Ombudsman

By Sue Hutton

Self-Advocate Council member Paul Cochrane, as many of us know, is not shy. Paul heard Laura Pettigrew, (a lawyer with Ontario’s Ombudsman) speak at Community Living Toronto’s Annual General Meeting (AGM) in September. He started chatting with her afterwards. He thought other self-advocates needed to hear her speak – because she was accessible. She spoke in clear, easy to

understand language. Laura talked at the AGM about how important it is to listen to people in developmental services. Listening is something the Self-Advocates Council thinks is really important.

The Ombudsman's office, where Laura works as a lawyer, does a lot of listening. They hear complaints from people in Ontario about lots of things. One of them is developmental services. Laura told us about "Ombudsman" being a Swedish word for "citizen's representative". It's an independent person who investigates complaints from the public about problems they see in government, and programs the government oversees. Right now, Ontario's Ombudsman is Andre Marin. He looks into Ontario issues that need to get better. There is an office of people (like Laura) who help him do this job.

Laura told the Self Advocates that complaints are good; they help make things better. Last year, Ontario's Ombudsman's office heard around 27, 000 complaints.

Laura brought Alanna Maloney along with her to meet with the Self-Advocates council. Alanna answers the phone at the Ombudsman's office. Alanna is called an Early Resolutions Officer. Alanna is there to help people who receive developmental services. She's had training in listening to people who have an intellectual disability. She talks a lot to people who receive developmental services and tries to help them.

They spoke with the council about an important process on filing a complaint. People first would file a complaint with the place they receive developmental services. (Talk to a supervisor, then their boss, then the regional executive director if things are getting better for you) If it doesn't get better, then one could talk to the Ministry of Community & Social Services. Then

after that, if it's not getting better, they would go to the Ombudsman's office. That's where Alanna and Laura help out.

The Self Advocates Council talked with Laura and Alanna about things that concern them. "How do people who don't use words to communicate file a complaint?" "How do people who aren't allowed to privately use a phone in a group home get to complain?", "How do people tell their parents they are allowed to handle their own money, and might need some actual support to learn to do it?" were some of the questions. In fact, there were so many questions, that Laura and Alanna agreed to come back to talk to us a little bit more if we ask them. They were really friendly, and taught the Self-Advocates Council a lot. They even gave everyone on council a cool baseball cap that says "Ombudsman" on it.

For more information about Ontario's Ombudsman, visit the website:  
<https://ombudsman.on.ca>



*Laura Pettigrew and Alanna Maloney from the Ombudsman's office.*

## Good IDEA!

By Ilaneet Goren



*Intellectual Disability Education Ambassadors (IDEA)*

One day I was chatting with Eman, our partner at CultureLink which is a settlement agency we collaborate with. I told her about our goal of reaching diverse communities across Toronto to deliver information about intellectual disability and connecting to services. “Why not have our newcomers do it?” she asked. My answer was, “Why not!”

That was early September. Two months later, we held our first official session of the collaborative peer project which we now call **Intellectual Disability Education Ambassadors (IDEA)**.

IDEA’s mission is to train a group of newcomers to deliver education sessions about intellectual disability within their cultural communities. The goal is to help reduce misinformation and language barriers experienced by newcomers who want to connect to developmental services. IDEA is part of the multi-year diversity initiative led by Developmental Services Toronto and Community Living Toronto with funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

The IDEA participants are newcomers with relevant educational and professional

backgrounds ranging from medicine and education to translation and social services. There are 9 countries represented in the group. Languages spoken include Farsi, Hindi, Arabic, Spanish, Mandarin, Greek and Bengali, with most participants being multilingual. Knowing about the challenges of immigration and settlement firsthand, they are passionate about making a difference by using their languages and understanding of cultural nuances to bring information to other newcomer families.

With very little time to plan, we created a basic training program that covered the definitions and types of intellectual disability, the types of services and supports available for children, adults and families, and tools for doing outreach and presentations in community settings. Our Ambassadors also learned how to use the **ConnectABILITY.ca** website to help families find information and resources like parent groups. When the training is completed, participants will be paired up with CL Toronto and DSO staff to deliver education sessions across various geographical areas and cultural communities. Some of them also plan to use their connections to specific ethno-cultural groups and organizations to help our staff build relationships and arrange education sessions.

We often hear that diversity breeds innovation, but this project is living proof of it.



*IDEA creating their training program.*

## Spinclusion's Cross Canada Journey

By Mia McGowan



Grade 6 teachers in Iqaluit learn how to facilitate Spinclusion through Cisco video conferencing.

Spinclusion, a game that encourages children and youth to celebrate differences and include everyone has had quite a year. Thanks to funding from the United Way, our Spinclusion website has gone from functional to fabulous. It is now bright, bold and user friendly. It is packed with facilitator tips, game pieces and everything a facilitator will need to have a successful Spinclusion session. The French version of the game is going to enable us to expand our audience substantially. That means more children and youth will be thinking about people's feelings, thinking positively about differences and looking beyond disability to a person's abilities.

The Spinclusion training across Canada has been incredible. From Victoria to Saint John's, 141 new facilitators from 108 organizations in 7 provinces and 1 territory are ready to go out into their communities and promote inclusion in a fun and engaging way with their newly received Spinclusion games. It has been a

pleasure travelling with Jenna Martinuzzi to some of the locations. After successfully training new Spinclusion facilitators in Winnipeg, we had an opportunity to visit the Human Rights Museum. It really had an impact on both of us.

Spinclusion was very well received in every community. The new facilitators were immediately thinking of how they could use the game. A First Nations community in Alberta that suffered devastating floods last year determined that Spinclusion would be just the tool needed to encourage the children to discuss the trauma they had endured. In PEI, a parents' group will play Spinclusion to encourage them to be inclusive of all children in their community. In Nunavut, school children will build a Spinclusion Inukshuk as a reminder to be a good friend and include everyone. These are just some of the innovative ways Spinclusion will be used to promote inclusion.

Thank you United Way for this fantastic opportunity to train, distribute and promote Spinclusion from coast to coast. It has truly been an amazing year!



"I imagine a world where everyone is included and respected."



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Central Region Spring Fling!

It might be hard to think about Spring before Winter has even begun, but mark your calendars for Central Region Council's premier fundraising event!

Spring Fling Dinner & Dance  
Saturday, April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015  
Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre  
\$50/ticket

Want to give back this holiday season? Or can't think of that perfect gift idea? In someone's name you can:

- (i) Sponsor an individual to attend.
- (ii) Sponsor a table.
- (iii) Make a donation.

For more information or to make a gift, contact Matt Poirier at **647-729-1210** or [matthew.poirier@cltoronto.ca](mailto:matthew.poirier@cltoronto.ca).

### Volunteer Dinner – Call for Nominations!

Regional Volunteer of the Year Awards will be presented on April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015. To nominate someone for Volunteer of the Year, contact your Regional Coordinator of Volunteer Services by January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

#### Central Region

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#### Scarborough Region

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