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October 2009 Issue

Tracy Gillis *From Rock Bottom*

Tracy Gillis, a petite 35 year old used her inner strength and acceptance to scale the heights of *Rock Bottom* and is still climbing.

Diagnosed at three with diabetes and from her 20's onward, Tracy experienced a series of altering events: a near death experience from an undiagnosed liver problem, a number of eye laser surgeries, a kidney transplant and a broken marriage. Mentally and financially exhausted, Tracy went through a spell of rock bottom reality where she struggled between giving up or climbing up.

"I realized that although being disabled is part of my life, it doesn't have to define me." Tracy explained. "At my lowest point, feeling defeated but not ready to give up, I contacted the Richmond Centre for counselling and then Patt Allen, the Employment Specialist with the PEI Council of People with Disabilities. Patt referred her to the Work Abilities Program which was her next reluctant step in her climb.

"I wasn't too keen on going through the nine week program but, little did I know it was the best thing I could have done for myself. At the Council, I found the best support system that I've ever come across in 33 years of being sick! In going through the Program I didn't realize how much



Tracy Gillis

work I would be doing emotionally and mentally. I found hope that things would get better! I found things to be excited and passionate about again!"

Tracy also gained insight and an appreciation of how her health issues affected her family relationships. Tracy learned that for many years her siblings thought she was the "favourite." Being young they didn't understand why Tracy needed extra care and attention. "Recently, I had a bit of an epiphany and realized my illness has had a profound effect on my family. What an extreme impact the worry and care was for them! Having disabilities doesn't only affect me; it affects everyone who is part of my life. My family needs assurance that I can take care of myself.

I am currently employed part-time and it has made a huge difference. In a sense, I feel like I have a new lease on life because I sourced who I am. Through the work that I have done through the Council I have hope and a better sense of who I am and what I have to offer."



Bernie Wilson

A Tale of Two Restrooms

By Bernie Wilson

"With apologies to Charles Dickens"

Two couples book a reservation at a nice restaurant. They arrive in plenty of time and are politely escorted to their table by the hostess. One member of the group leaves for a short time. The guest returns and has a whispered conversation with his friends. They then leave the restaurant. The waiter comes out to a reserved table but no diners. Why?

The answer is that one or more of the dinner guests has a disability. The restroom is inaccessible.

Later in the week the group book another restaurant. Everyone has a very good dinner and quite a pleasant evening. One of the similarities in the establishments is that each manager had told the diners that the restaurant is wheelchair accessible.

Happily, inaccessible restaurants are slowly disappearing from our province. The illustration below shows the numerous dimensions of a public washroom to be considered barrier free. My personal definition is "If I don't need to think about it, it's barrier free". Because each of our disabilities is unique, everybody's definition is as well. In short, "We all need to go so we all need to know".

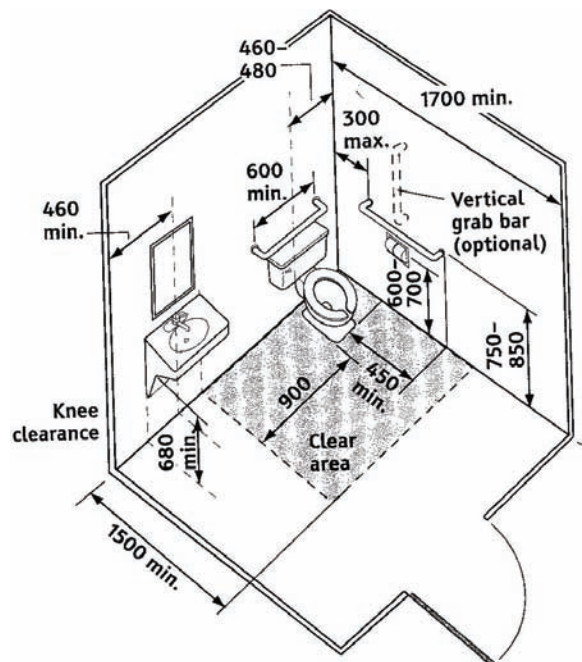


Diagram: Courtesy of (CSA Standard)
Accessible design for the built environment

Brain Basics Training Program

For Health Care Workers and Caregivers of Acquired Brain Injury

Modules of the Program

- Modules 1 Parts and Functions of the Brain
- Module 2 ABI: Types and Causes
- Module 3 ABI: General Strategies
- Module 4 ABI: Consequences and Strategies: Physical
- Module 5 ABI: Consequences and Strategies: Cognitive
- Module 6 ABI: Consequences and Strategies: Behavioral
- Module 7 ABI: Support Roles: Team and Family

Date: October 14 & 15, 2009

Location: Murchison Centre, 15-17 Pius X Ave.

Time: 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. (daily)

Cost: \$210



*Presented by the Ontario
Brain Injury Association (OBIA)*



**Front Row: left to right Darlene Richards, Judy Acorn, Serge Gallant
Back Row: Wendy Gunning, Sheila Doucette & Cathy Rose, Coordinator**

Work Abilities Five Participants completed the 9 week Employment and Career Enhancement Program from the PEI Council of People with Disabilities office in Summerside.

Some comments about the program:

“That I have value, that I’d rather work with the public, that I have some amazing skills!”

‘It has given me some ambition in my personal life, made me think about where I really want to work and maybe going back to school will be an option....’

“This workshop was very helpful. They work with you instead of telling you what to do. They encourage and share information on a variety of supports.”

“This was an excellent experience and very much appreciated...best I’ve gone to in all my years. Thank you!”



Pat Rose

HONOURARY SERVICE AWARD

Pat Rose recently received the PEI Council of People with Disabilities 2009 Honorary Service Award for a Lifetime of Volunteer Achievement.

Congratulations Pat!



Tim Beal & Stanley Onwukwe

Work Abilities

Stanley Onwukwe, Work Abilities Facilitator, assists Tim Beal with course material at the Council’s Charlottetown Work Abilities Center.



Designated Parking Permit — Renewal 2010

Designated Parking Permit Renewal Forms will be mailed to Parking Permit holders later this month. The 2010 fee is \$13.00.



The Coordinator and Tutors of the Summer Tutoring Program

Summer Tutoring Program 2009

The PEICOD Summer Tutoring Program is a valuable service that helps children with disabilities retain their previously learned skills throughout the summer. It is recognized as a reliable and indispensable program that has been running for over 20 years. Previously, it was run by the Education Coalition until the coalition was disbanded and handed over control of the program to the PEICOD in 2006. This year the program had over 165 students enrolled, and employed 16 tutors. All of the staff involved with the program have either completed their degree in education or are involved in the human services field.

Best of Luck to all the 2009 Tutors, Participants and Coordinator, Darcy Beck for a job well done!



ABILITY NEWS

CONTACT US

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JOB SEARCH/RECRUITING: New Canadian Job Matching Site

The Canadian Abilities Foundation has partnered with the Workopolis NicheNetwork in launching a new on-line job board - jobs.abilities.ca. Workopolis.com is Canada's largest job site with nearly 4 million users a month and more Canadian employees and employers trust Workopolis to make their career connection than any other service online or off. The Canadian Abilities Foundation acts as a forum for the exchange of information to promote an inclusive society and provide inspiration and opportunity for people with disabilities. More information: <http://jobs.abilities.ca>



DISABILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEES MEETINGS

EASTERN KINGS

Souris Hospital
Main Level Boardroom at 1:30 pm
Wednesdays
Oct 21, Nov 18, Dec 16

SOUTHERN KINGS

Montague
PEI COD Boardroom at 12 noon
Wednesdays
Oct 28, Nov 25, Dec 23

QUEENS

Charlottetown
PEI COD Boardroom at 3 pm
Wednesdays
Oct 21, Nov 18, Dec 16

EAST PRINCE

Summerside
Lions Seniors Complex, Brophy St. at 1:30 pm
Tuesdays Oct 13, Nov 10, Dec 8

WEST PRINCE

Alberton
Maplewood Manor at 12:30 pm
Tuesdays Oct 20, Nov 17, Dec 15