

DABC: Why We Do
What We Do

Getting to Know
Advocacy Access

Community Partnership
Launches RDSP Program

transition

The Magazine of Disability Alliance BC



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editorial

| BY PAT DANFORTH

Recently my cousin Linda died. She lived a quiet life and happened to live with intellectual and physical disabilities. She didn't advocate for herself—her support network did. They did what they could and used the services in the community to make her life the best it could be.

It got me thinking about expectations and why Disability Alliance BC does what it does. The core reason is we have a strong belief that, as an organization of and for people with disabilities, we can help folks help themselves.

Disability Alliance BC (DABC) has been a provincial, cross-disability voice in British Columbia since 1977. Our founders knew that, to be part of the community, we needed to speak out on issues affecting our lives and work to get the services and programs we needed.

Today, we bring together like-minded individuals and organizations, governments and others to remove barriers that still exist, and create greater inclusion for people with disabilities.

Most of our frontline work is done through our Advocacy Access program. We provide a wide range of services, including helping people to access the Persons with Disabilities

why we do what we do

ties (PWD) benefit, the Persons with Persistent and Multiple Barriers to Employment (PPMB) benefit, and the Canada Pension Plan Disability (CPPD) benefit.

It's our busiest program. Our advocates also give capacity-building workshops across BC to community organizations, health professionals,

Today, we bring together like-minded individuals and organizations, governments and others to remove barriers that still exist, and create greater inclusion for people with disabilities.

and people with disabilities and their support networks. Through Advocacy Access, we also publish free self-help guides and advocates' manuals that are our most downloaded resources.

When we opened Tax AID DABC, a financial literacy component of Advocacy Access in 2015, even we didn't anticipate the response. This busy program helps PWD and PPMB recipients file their current and past years' income taxes.

And late this year, through the support of the Vancouver Foundation, we were very excited to start work with Plan Institute and the BC



Aboriginal Network on Disability Society to help people access the Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP).

Other work in the community includes emergency preparedness. We're passionate about preparedness for people with disabilities and are currently working with

local governments to ensure the needs of people with disabilities are included in emergency planning and response. We're also working on food security for people with disabilities living on low incomes, and recently completed a program to train service providers about violence prevention for women with disabilities.

You'll see more about all these programs and partnerships in this Transition.

Making a difference means we speak out on issues of concern to the disability community, including changes to the bus pass program for PWD recipients and the urgent need

for an increase to PWD rates which remain unacceptably low.

It also means ongoing work with community groups and government to improve services and programs, and develop new ones.

As far as we know, DABC was the first organization in BC to advocate for an annualized earning exemption (AEE) for PWD recipients. Since the AEE was established, the overall amount of earnings that people receiving PWD are reporting has increased significantly.

The increase from \$5,000 to \$100,000 in allowable asset limits for PWD recipients; the new streamlined application process for people on BC PharmaCare Plan P (Palliative Care Benefits); the Ministry of Children and Family Development At Home Program; Community Living British Columbia (CLBC) Programs and CPP-D are other examples of what can be accomplished through working in coalition and cross-sectoral collaborations.

Part of our work includes providing input at the national level. As a member of the Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD), we are developing and sharing our views on the planned *Canadian Accessibility and Inclusion Act*.

We're also developing a submission, with many national groups, for the Government of Canada's report on the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The report will be the first stage of the reporting process by the United Nations. This important work can and will impact us at the provincial level.

As far as we know, DABC was the first organization in BC to advocate for an annualized earning exemption (AEE) for PWD recipients. Since the AEE was established, the overall amount of earnings that people receiving PWD are reporting has increased significantly.

Like any non-profit, one of our constant challenges is funding. As DABC approaches its 40th anniversary, we sincerely thank our current funders who make our work possible. As part of our anniversary celebration, we will be introducing ourselves to new partners and supporters. Our annual Swing Into Spring event will be held April 6, 2017 at the Italian Cultural Centre in Vancouver.

As President of the volunteer board, I am proud of the work we do. Our board is a unique combination of disabilities, regional representation, ages and gender. We watch over and approve the many DABC activities.

Like most volunteers, we do this because we need and want to be part of positive change in the lives of people with disabilities. We are part of the picture.

While changes are often achingly slow, we will continue to work on righting longstanding wrongs.

We created this Transition to give you a look inside what we do every day and why we do it.

PAT DANFORTH IS THE PRESIDENT OF DABC. 

ABOUT TRANSITION

Editorial Statement

The views and opinions expressed within the pages of TRANSITION are not necessarily those held by the total membership or Board of Directors. The material presented is meant to be thought-provoking and to promote dialogue.

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Getting to Know Advocacy Access

I by Sam Turcott

Our aim is to deliver services that are Friendly, discreet, respectFul, inclusive, and which promote the independence and dignity of people with disabilities. Many of our advocates have lived experience with disabilities.

Advocacy Access is a program of Disability Alliance BC that pairs individuals with disabilities in BC with advocates who provide one-on-one assistance to access a range of income supports and services.

Our aim is to deliver services that are friendly, discreet, respectful, inclusive, and which promote the independence and dignity of people with disabilities. Many of our advocates have lived experience with disabilities.

Advocacy Access advocates can help to apply for and appeal the denial of a number of benefits from the BC Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation (MSDSI) including the Persons with Disabilities (PWD) designation, Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers to Employment (PPMB) status, and the Monthly Nutritional Supplement.

Our advocates also help with reconsiderations and appeals for Canada Pension Plan Disability (CPP-D) benefits. We also provide information and referrals to people around the province via the toll-free Advocacy Access phone line.

In July 2015, we launched Tax AID DABC which has become a core component of the financial literacy and wellness arm of our Advocacy Access program. Tax AID DABC advocates help individuals receiving

PWD and PPMB assistance to catch up on unfiled income taxes. Up to the time of writing this article, advocates have helped people with disabilities in BC to access more than \$670,000 in income tax benefits.

Our newest program, launched in partnership with the BC Aboriginal Network on Disability Society and Plan Institute in September 2016, assists people eligible for the Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP) in BC to apply for the Disability Tax Credit and get support opening an RDSP to save for their future (see page 12).

Advocacy Access advocates are available to provide free educational workshops on various disability benefits and programs. We have recently presented in Powell River, Sechelt, Victoria, Terrace, Kelowna, Kamloops, Penticton and Vernon.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How much does it cost to get help from an Advocacy Access advocate?

A: All the services provided by our advocates are offered free of charge.

Q: Are your advocates lawyers?

A: No. However, much of the work our advocates perform is overseen by a supervising lawyer. In addition to extensive, practical experience and training, Advocacy Access advocates have a variety of educational

Advocacy Access advocates are available to provide Free educational workshops on various disability benefits and programs.

backgrounds including social work and law.

Q: What if I need help with an issue Advocacy Access advocates cannot help with?

A: Our advocates are familiar with many community resources and will do their best to refer you to a service that may be able to help you.

A Final Word from One of Our Clients

"I was able to pick up my PWD cheques yesterday. It seems everything is in place. This is a big relief to my wife and I. We are very appreciative of all your work. I cannot see how any person would be able to navigate this sort of thing alone. Thank you so very much."

SAM TURCOTT IS PROGRAM DIRECTOR OF ADVOCACY ACCESS AND MANAGER OF TAX AID DABC. 

HOW TO CONTACT AN ADVOCATE OR BOOK A WORKSHOP

There is a huge demand for our advocates' advice and assistance. An appointment is needed to meet with an advocate in person.

To book an appointment, please call:

Local: 604-872-1278

Toll Free: 1-800-663-1278

For details on booking a free workshop for your organization, please contact Val:

604-875-0188

feedback@disabilityalliancebc.org

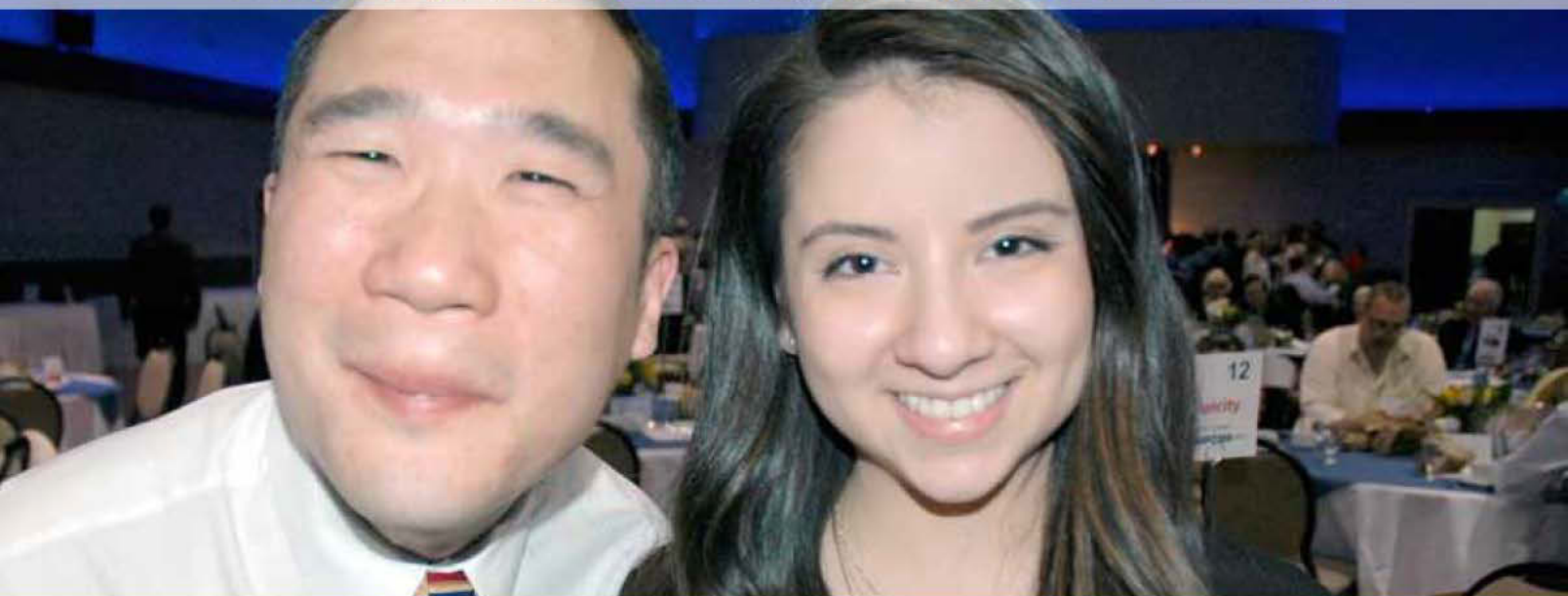


Learn more about how Advocacy Access can help you at:
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SWING INTO SPRING APRIL 6, 2017

SPECIAL 40TH ANNIVERSARY EVENT!

EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR 2016 AARON LEE, WITH KATHRYN HANSEN FROM VANCITY



On April 6th 2017, we'll be hosting our fifth annual Swing Into Spring gala and celebrating our 40th anniversary. We're thrilled to be welcoming back CBC's Stephen Quinn and entertainer David C. Jones (or is that quiz game host Sterling Sterling?) to help us celebrate this significant milestone for our organization. And you'll hear the amazing Kathryn Peterson and her red accordion!

This year we'll be at a new venue, the Italian Cultural Centre in East Vancouver. We're excited to

be putting on our special annual event with our friends at the Centre who were such fantastic hosts of our 2016 AGM.

At Swing Into Spring 2017, it will be our great honour to give DABC's annual Outstanding Employer and Employee of the Year awards.

We encourage you to nominate an employer who has demonstrated excellence in the hiring of people with disabilities, and an employee with a disability who has excelled in their field.

We hope you'll join us on April 6th to enjoy delicious Italian food, try your luck with our raffle, bid on fantastic silent and live auction items, and celebrate our 40th anniversary. And of course we'll be bringing back our popular quiz game.

Tickets are \$95 each and can be purchased online or by calling our office. All proceeds from Swing Into Spring benefit people with disabilities through DABC's programs and services.

See you April 6th!

Order your tickets today at <http://tinyurl.com/h3h3wf4> or call Chloe at 604-875-0188. Download an Employer of the Year Nomination form at <http://tinyurl.com/nh3w8ob>

BC's Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program helped Sharon Lambert keep the performing alive.



The Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program (EDP) provides flexible business loans and assistance to business owners who are managing ongoing health or disability issues. Can EDP help you? Just ask Sharon Lambert from Chilliwack. Her operatic performing career was cut short by an auto accident, but, she is now is a professional voice over artist:



"EDP made my business fit into my life versus fitting my life into my business."

Read the full story at: www.edploans.ca

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1.888.303.2232 | www.edploans.ca

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DABC in the Community

Advocacy Workshops

BY ASHLEY SILCOCK

We offer free workshops to community organizations on income assistance and disability topics.

Working in the Advocacy Access program has given me the opportunity to travel to many different parts of BC.

I give free workshops to community organizations on topics such as the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation (MSDSI) Income Assistance and the PWD Benefit; Canada Pension Plan Disability Benefits from Application to Appeal; and, the Disability Tax Credit and Registered Disability Savings Plan.

I especially enjoy going to communities that don't have the same access to services that a person would have in a major city.

Here are some of the most frequently asked questions at our workshops.

I don't have a doctor to fill in my PWD application form. What can I do?

This is a huge problem province-wide and there is no easy solution

to it. Sometimes people are able to get an appointment with a doctor who is treating a friend or a family member. Sometimes people are able to see the same doctor at a walk-in clinic over time and build up a history with them.

Also, a recent policy change allows nurse practitioners to complete the medical report in a PWD application form. So you can consider finding a nurse practitioner.

Why does MSDSI refuse to give me the \$100 clothing allowance?

For people who are getting funds from MSDSI, there is a clothing crisis supplement. To qualify, the Ministry needs to see that you have an unexpected need and that you don't have the funds to meet that need yourself.

I don't think I qualify for the Disability Tax Credit (DTC). I'm still working and I can still do things for myself.

Employability has nothing to do with the Disability Tax Credit.

In fact, I am employed and have the DTC. To receive the DTC, a person has to be restricted almost all of the time, but if it is taking you significantly longer to do things in one area of your life or if you have conditions that have a cumulative impact, then you may qualify.

ASHLEY SILCOCK IS AN ADVOCATE WITH ADVOCACY ACCESS. 

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New Provincial Partnership Offers DTC and RDSP Assistance | BY JANE DYSON

BC already leads Canada in the number of RDSPs that have been opened.

However, there is still significant room for improvement and this new program will help ensure as many British Columbians as possible benefit from the financial security that having an RDSP provides.

On September 1, 2016, DABC, Plan Institute and the British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society (BCANDS) launched an exciting new four-year project partnership, with the support of the Vancouver Foundation.

The goal of this new provincial initiative is to provide direct assistance to British Columbians with all aspects of opening a Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP).

BC already leads Canada in the number of RDSPs that have been opened.

However, there is still significant room for improvement and this new program will help ensure as many British Columbians as possible benefit from the financial security that having an RDSP provides.

To open an RDSP, individuals first need to have been approved for the Disability Tax Credit (DTC). Under

this new partnership, DABC will be providing one-on-one assistance to apply for the DTC.

Once the client has the DTC, we will work with them to connect with Plan Institute who will provide them with direct assistance to open an RDSP.

DABC and Plan Institute will also be providing workshops and information sessions across BC to community organizations, banks, credit unions and individuals to raise awareness about RDSPs and provide direct assistance.

As part of our partnership, Plan Institute will be operating the Endowment 150 program, also called E150.

Through this initiative, Plan will provide a one-time \$150 gift to individuals and families living on low-incomes who are residents of BC and who have an RDSP.

BCANDS will be operating an RDSP navigator program for members of the Indigenous community. Through this initiative, BCANDS will provide help with the DTC and RDSP. They will also work with Plan to produce an updated and Indigenous version of the RDSP book, *Safe and Secure*.

vancouver foundation

Thank you to the
Vancouver Foundation for their
generous support of this program.



To access DABC's RDSP and DTC services,
or to request one of our workshops,
please contact us at:

Local: 604-872-1278
Toll Free: 1-800-663-1278
rdsp@disabilityalliancebc.org



Contact BCANDS for details on their
navigator program at:

Phone: (250) 381-7303
Toll Free: 1-888-815 -5511 (TTY Accessible)
bcands@bcands.bc.ca



To find out more about Plan and Endowment 150,
please go to www.rdsp.com/Endowment150.
Plan will also be expanding its RDSP information hotline at
1-844-311-7526 and will continue to provide its
RDSP online tutorial at www.rdsp.com.

We are confident we will
be able to help hundreds
more people with
disabilities living on low
income to improve their
financial security.

This new program complements our
Tax AID DABC Program, launched
in 2015. Through Tax AID, we have
been able to assist hundreds of peo-
ple living on low income to access
over \$670,000 dollars.

Our new RDSP/DTC program will
build on this financial literacy work.
We are confident we will be able to
help hundreds more people with
disabilities living on low income to
improve their financial security.

Please see the contact information
for all our programs on this page.

Our sincere thanks to the Vancouver
Foundation for making the new pro-
gram possible, and to Plan Institute
and BCANDS for their partnership.

JANE DYSON IS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF
DABC. 



Connect with DABC!

BY CHLOE KRAUSE

DABC has embraced social media as an integral and fun way to connect with our clients and community partners.

Whether you're a fan of Twitter, Facebook or LinkedIn, you can keep in touch with DABC and get all the latest news about our work, programs and services, and find out what's happening in the wider disability community!

We also run a blog which is a great way to find more detailed information about issues and news of interest to the disability community.

Our Facebook and Twitter accounts are usually updated daily, sometimes more. We're always keeping an eye on our community partners' feeds for interesting stories and news we think you'll find valuable.

Follow us on your favourite social media platform(s) to stay in the loop!

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Twitter

<https://twitter.com/DisabAllianceBC>

Blog

<http://blog.disabilityalliancebc.org>

LinkedIn

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/disability-alliance-bc>

DABC Welcomes New Board Members

On July 9, DABC held its Annual General Meeting (AGM) at the Italian Cultural Centre. DABC's Nominating Committee, comprised of three existing DABC Board members, recommended two individuals for our Board of Directors: **Michelle Hewitt** and **Elizabeth Lalonde**.

We were thrilled when DABC's membership voted to welcome them to the Board. Michelle and Elizabeth both have years of experience working with and for the disability community, and they bring their invaluable knowledge and unique perspectives to the Board.

Michelle Hewitt has a long history of volunteerism and advocacy. In 2008, she was diagnosed with an aggressive form of MS and has been in a wheelchair since 2009. Since then, she has turned her volunteerism to advocacy on disability issues, including acting as chair of her local MS Society chapter, a member of the MS Society of Canada BCY Division Government relations committee and a regional representative for Barrier Free BC. In Kelowna, Michelle has developed the Central Okanagan HandyDART Action Committee (COHAC) to work with the City of Kelowna on matters of accessible transportation.

Prior to her disability, Michelle was a principal in School District 23. Michelle lives in Kelowna with her husband who is her full-time carer and her two Bernese Mountain dogs.

Elizabeth Lalonde, mother of two young sons, has extensive personal and professional experience in the field of blindness and disability issues.

Ms Lalonde, blind since birth, is founder and director of the Pacific Training Centre for the Blind—a grassroots organization that teaches independence skills. The Centre is run entirely by people who are blind.

Elizabeth also served as president of the Canadian Federation of the Blind for nine years, and has been an advocate and mentor for over 25 years.

She completed a course called *EntreActive*, a self-employment program for persons with disabilities run through Business Victoria, and taught grant writing for this organization.

She served as president of the Society for Students with a Disability for three years, where she organized several awareness and advocacy related events and activities.

She earned a BA in journalism and anthropology from the University of Victoria, and worked for several years as a communications coordinator for the Province of British Columbia.

Elizabeth has a positive attitude and strongly believes in the importance of promoting a positive approach to disability and the abilities of all people with disabilities. **T**

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DABC's Accessibility and Inclusion Projects | by Karen Martin

Over the 12 years I've worked at DABC, I've coordinated quite a range of projects! Today, these projects revolve around training and education in accessibility and inclusion. Their goal is to build community capacity and establish partnerships that will help us meet DABC's mission and make a difference for people with disabilities in communities throughout BC. Most of this work is raising awareness in government departments and programs, businesses and community organizations, but a new anti-violence project will also help to educate people with disabilities directly.

Emergency Preparedness

DABC received funding in March 2016 from Emergency Management BC (a program of the provincial government) to work with local emergency programs in different regions of BC over the next two years.

The program's goal is to help communities better respond to the needs of people with disabilities in emergencies and disasters. We're very excited to begin this project.

We always stress the importance of preparedness being a whole community's job when it comes to supporting people with disabilities. Because the reality is that for many people living with a disability, individual preparedness isn't possible. For example, a person's caregiver or attendant may not be present, they may have had to evacuate without their assistive equipment or devices, or they may be living on a low-income and cannot afford an emergency kit.

This program will build on DABC's ongoing relationships in the emergency management and response sector. I'll be reviewing emergency plans and response procedures to make recommendations based on the Functional Needs Framework (FNF) approach to emergency preparedness (you can learn more about the FNF in the Fall 2016 edition of Transition). To help communities plan and respond, I'm creating templates and FNF checklists for local emergency programs, and delivering training in communities throughout BC.

I'm proud to bring my 10 years of experience with people with disabilities and emergencies to the local communities we'll be working with.

Right to Be Safe Project

In 2015/16, I coordinated a project for DABC called, Right to be Safe: Creating Inclusive Services for Women with Disabilities Experiencing Violence. The goal of this project was to help frontline services meet the needs of women with disabilities. We enabled service providers to develop and implement accessible, inclusive community strategies, interventions and supports for women with disabilities experiencing or at-risk of experiencing violence.

The nature of violence against women with disabilities and deaf women differs from women without disabilities because they face systemic exclusion and significant lack of accessible, appropriate supports and services. DABC's project addressed the need for violence against women service providers to understand the intersection between gender and disability violence.

I redesigned and delivered the Right to be Safe full-day training to service providers in the violence prevention and response sectors. Over 80 service providers representing 11 communities in BC received this training.

Through this anti-violence work, DABC established new cross-sectoral relationships with, for exam-

ple, the Ending Violence Association of BC (EVA BC) and the Provincial Office of Domestic Violence. On DABC's behalf, I am also a member of the BC Coordinating Committee on Women's Safety which has broad representation from the violence prevention and response sector, and is coordinated by EVA BC.

Here is a sample of comments from people after they took the Right to Be Safe training.

"[I learned about] the need to start communicating effectively with everyone."

"[I will] advocate for changes at our building which provides services for families around accessibility."



"I can lead by example and educate other service providers if they are unsure how to support women with disabilities and I can role model proper language/terminology about people with disabilities."

"Describing the rights that people with disabilities have [was useful]."

"I have the ability to recognize the things that make a place inaccessible or unusable for those with disabilities."

"[I am] looking at our organization through a different lens and assessing my own assumptions and beliefs."

"[I now have] a greater awareness about diversity and needs and can prepare for situations with the helpful handouts. [I will] rethink our information and outreach materials."

New Anti-violence Project in 2017/18

DABC just received funding for a new anti-violence project, funded by the Department of Justice Canada's Victims Fund. In 2017/18, we will create plain language and ASL videos and help sheets for people with disabilities who are victims of crime. We will be working with our community partners to develop and share these resources: Communication Disabilities Access Canada; Ending Violence Association of BC; Inclusion BC; the Provincial Office of Domestic Violence, Ministry of Children and Family Development; and, the BC Ministry of Public Safety, Community Programs, Victim Services and Crime Prevention.

Another component of the project is training victim services organizations. I will be delivering webinars to train staff at these organizations and share the resources we develop during the project.

There will be updates in Transition on this project after our launch in January 2017.

KAREN MARTIN IS COORDINATOR OF ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION TRAINING AT DABC. 

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THANK YOU!

DABC Partnerships

Working to Make Communities Safer



DABC is working to find community partners as part of our project, A Functional Needs Framework for Every Community. The City of Surrey has been very involved. Here are some of the Surrey initiatives that support individuals with disabilities:

While disasters and emergencies affect everyone, their impact on people with disabilities and seniors is often compounded by factors such as reliance on electrical power, elevators, accessible transportation and accessible communication. For these reasons, the City of Surrey has taken a proactive approach to ensure these needs are taken into consideration.

City staff have received training from Communication Disabilities Access Canada on the best practices for working with individuals with communication disabilities. Many staff members have had additional training in the areas of inclusion strategies and emergency preparedness so that they will be able to provide the best support. Some of the ways they are doing this include:

- Adding specific tips on assisting individuals with varying abilities to City Hall's evacuation materials
- Collaborating with DABC to implement use of the C-MIST Framework
- Offering specialized training to ESS staff and volunteers
- Purchasing additional batteries to be used at reception centres for individuals with assistive devices


Get Your C-MIST Emergency Card today!

In the event of an emergency, this card is to be used by responders to assist individuals with disabilities with their functional and medical needs. People with functional needs may have limitations in a number of areas, such as hearing, seeing, mobility, learning, speech, language and understanding.

The functional needs approach to emergency response is a new way of helping people and making sure their needs are met by looking at the five key areas of C-MIST. DABC worked with the City of Surrey to create this emergency card.

To download a digital copy of the C-MIST pamphlet visit: www.surrey.ca/sep

If you would like a printed out version of the C-MIST pamphlet, visit Surrey City Hall (13450 104 Ave, Surrey, BC) and head over to the "Healthy Communities" department on the first floor.

For more information about DABC's project, contact Karen Martin, karen@disabilityalliancebc.org 

"Thank you so much for your help and concern! If it wasn't for you, I wouldn't have gotten these benefits."

The only difference between most of my clients and most other people is a disability and a couple of paycheques. As a person who once received disability supports, it's a joy and a privilege to assist the disability community with eligibility for income and medical benefits from the Ministry of Social Innovation and Social Development (MSDSI). I know that qualifying for these benefits makes a huge difference in people's day-to-day living.

I help people with appeals for PWD and PPMB designations, financial eligibility issues, the monthly nutritional supplement, medical supplies, equipment and devices such as support stockings, scooters, wheelchairs and CPAP ventilators, and generally navigating the provincial disability system.

Whenever I can, I also provide information and referrals about many services or programs outside of DABC's mandate.

Opening up to a stranger like me or a doctor about the challenges posed by your disabling condition is intimidating, so I try to be a good listener and respect the often difficult

journeys of clients. Client comments like "You made me feel comfortable. You are a truly welcoming professional." And, "Your calm and kindness have been so appreciated," mean a lot.

These benefits or supplements are not a "cure," but many clients seem to improve once they get some help. Access to enhanced medical coverage and a little more money to pay for things like food and shelter, a disability bus pass (or upkeep of their vehicle), and user fees for services like physiotherapy or optical tests, boosts wellness.

One client told me, "This extra money is a big help and I hope my depression and anxiety will be better."

Getting the PWD designation also helps single people make a successful application for BC Housing. Affordable and accessible housing is a huge concern, so this designation is important. For those who are able to work, the annual earned income exemption raises income and morale.

I hope you can see why this work we do inspires passion. If you think we can help you, please contact our office.

An appointment is needed to meet with an advocate in person. Please call:

Local: 604-872-1278

Toll Free: 1-800-663-1278 



Helping You with Appeals

BY ANNETTE MURRAY

Opening up to a stranger like me or a doctor about the challenges posed by your disabling condition is intimidating, so I try to listen well and respect the often difficult journeys of clients.



How You Can Support DABC

BY CHLOE KRAUSE

Would you like to support the work we do? There are lots of ways to help—big and small.

All of our programs and services aim to help people with disabilities across BC to participate in and contribute to their communities. As a non-profit organization, we rely on a range of funders, including individuals, to be able to do our work. Your support is invaluable! Please consider some of these ways you can help us.

Swing Into Spring

The most fun way you can support DABC is by attending our annual fundraising gala, Swing Into Spring! Our 2017 event will be held April 6th at the Italian Cultural Centre, hosted by the always charming Stephen Quinn (CBC Radio's *On the Coast*). There will be fabulous music, live and silent auctions, a raffle and, back by popular demand, a quiz game. This year's Swing will also be DABC's 40th Anniversary!

Become a Member!

DABC is a member-based charitable organization and there is strength in numbers. Please consider becoming a member. Membership is \$15 per year and members receive a number of


benefits, including our quarterly Transition magazine, voting rights at our Annual General Meeting (for members with a disability), community alerts by email, and news about DABC events, workshops and training.

Please download our brochure at www.disabilityalliancebc.org/docs/dabcbrochure-web.pdf, fill out the membership form on the last page and return with payment to our office. You can also pay by credit card over the phone or by email: 604-875-0188 or feedback@disabilityalliancebc.org.

Make a Donation

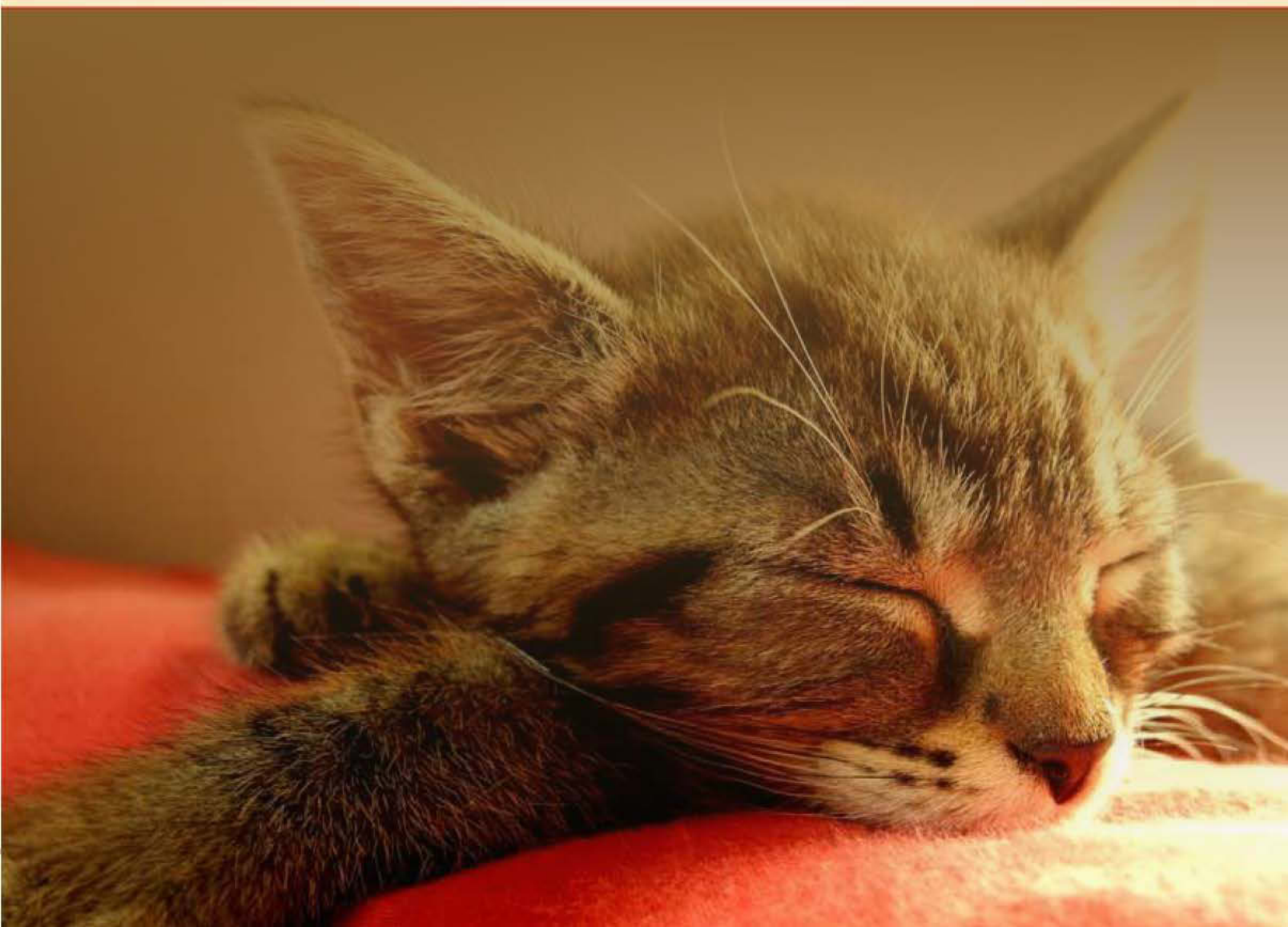
Individual donations, big or small, help keep our doors open. You can donate online at www.canadahelps.org, over the phone, by mail or by fax. You can make a one-time donation or become a monthly donor and join our Visionaries Circle.

For more information on how you can donate or to download a donor form, please visit our Support and Advertising page: www.disabilityalliancebc.org/support-advertise.htm.

Your support and generosity are greatly appreciated! We could not offer our services and programs without you. 

From the DABC Board of Directors,
staff and volunteers, we wish you
a purrfect and relaxing holiday
season and New Year.

Warmest wishes to you and yours.





Peer Support and Community Building

BY CHRISTINE GORDON

Several members of the Board had previously been residents of George Pearson Centre and they recognized that peer support had been a crucial factor in helping them to leave institutional life and resettle in the community.

The Community and Residents Mentors Association (CARMA) began in 1998 as an initiative of the Board of Directors of the BC Coalition of People with Disabilities (now DABC).

Several members of the Board had previously been residents of George Pearson Centre and they recognized that peer support had been a crucial factor in helping them to leave institutional life and resettle in the community. They wanted to give back to the people they had left behind by creating a peer support program aimed at helping people to leave the care facility.

In the early 2000s, CARMA's goals morphed to include supporting residents who were not able to leave the facility to have more control over the quality of their lives. CARMA's peer mentors reactivated the Residents' Council and helped residents to advocate for a more home-like environment at Pearson. In line with this goal, CARMA has championed the creation of

two private family rooms where residents or their families can stay overnight or longer, neighbourhood meetings can take place to allow decision-making to be as close to the ground as possible, and advocacy for more mobility opportunities, better food and person centered care planning at the facility.

CARMA has also tried to build bridges between the residents and the world outside by creating a residents' website www.pearsonresidents.org, engaging with partners like www.farmerson57th.ca to create residents' gardens and an urban farm, and engaging residents in the redevelopment process planned for the Pearson lands through participatory action research and analysis. <http://pearsondogwood.vchnews.ca/wp-content/uploads/PRRG-Report-February-2013-1.pdf>

CARMA Quick Facts

- CARMA's work is confined to the George Pearson Centre. Despite the fact that there may be more than 200 adults with disabilities living in care facilities across Vancouver, CARMA only has the resources to assist the 114 adults at Pearson Centre.

- CARMA helps four people on average to leave the facility every year. Each resettlement in the community takes at least six months of work once housing is secured. More people could leave each year if there was more accessible, subsidized housing available.
- CARMA has a farm to table community kitchen meal each month at Pearson where residents can experience what the trendiest gourmet restaurants offer. Volunteers are always needed and welcome for this monthly event. See our Summer 2016 edition of Transition, pp 20-21.

In the Words of Pearson Residents

"My friends have noticed a huge improvement in my intellectual and emotional well being since my move. They say that CARMA saved my life and I don't argue with them."

"It makes me happy to speak to all of the CARMA team members because I feel less lonely."

CHRISTINE GORDON IS POLICY AND PROGRAM CONSULTANT FOR DABC AND THE MODERATOR OF THE BC PERSONAL SUPPORTS NETWORK. **T**



We couldn't do it without you.

Thank you to these organizations, government departments and companies who support our work on behalf of people with disabilities.

BC Association for Individualized
Technology and Supports for People with
Disabilities

BC Government and Services Employees
Union

BC Housing, HAFI Program

BC Hydro Employees Community Services
Fund

Ministry of Justice, Province of British
Columbia, with Civil Forfeiture Proceeds

Canadian Union of Public Employees of BC

Canadian Union of Public Employees of BC
Local 1936

Canadian Union of Public Employees of BC
Local 1004

City of Vancouver

Community Futures British Columbia

Council of Canadians with Disabilities

Employment and Social Development
Canada

Emergency Management BC, Ministry of
Transportation and Infrastructure

Government of Canada's Social
Development Partnership Program-
Disability Component

Health Sciences Association of BC

Home Medical Equipment Dealers
Association of BC

Hospital Employees Union, People with
Disabilities Committee

Klein Lawyers LLP

The Law Foundation of British Columbia

Ministry of Justice and Attorney General
Canada-Victim's Fund

Murphy Battista LLP

No Frills Pharmacy (Loblaws)

Notary Foundation of BC

Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network

Provincial Health Services Authority

Simpson Thomas and Associates

TELUS Employees Charitable Giving
Program

Trial Lawyers Association of BC

United Way of the Lower Mainland

Vancity

Vancity Credit Union Fairview Community
Branch

Vancouver Coastal Health

Vancouver Foundation

Vancouver Taxi Association



**We gratefully acknowledge
the financial support of the
Province of BC.**

Helping Clients with CPP Disability Benefits

BY ASHLEY SILCOCK

I am one of the CPP Disability (CPP-D) advocates with DABC's Advocacy Access program. I help with navigating the often long CPP-D process, including reconsiderations and tribunals.

Depending on the situation, this can mean helping someone all the way from their application, through to the reconsideration of their CPP-D denial, and up to the Social Security Tribunal.

As much as possible, we try to provide support, information and advice to people throughout BC who may be living in communities where there is no access to advocacy resources.

CPP-D Frequently Asked Questions

How long do I have to pay into CPP before I can collect disability benefits?

A person has to have worked and paid into the plan for at least four out of six years (or three out of six, if they've been paying into CPP for more than 25 years). Service Canada calls this the Minimum Qualifying

Period (MQP). By the end of a person's MQP, they have to be able to show their disability is both severe and prolonged.

What is a severe and prolonged disability?

For CPP-D eligibility, a disability is severe if it would stop a person from pursuing or doing any sort of regularly scheduled, substantially gainful employment. Not being able to do your previous job may not be enough to meet this criterion. For CPP-D, you also have to be unable to retrain or to do different types of lighter work.

A disability is considered prolonged if it is likely to be long-continued for the foreseeable future.

How much money will I get from CPP-D?

The amount changes depending on how much you've paid into the plan. There is a flat rate which, in 2016, is \$471.43 per month for everyone who is collecting CPP-D. That flat rate is added to an amount based on how much you've paid into CPP over the years.

The current maximum is \$1,290.81 and the average benefits are \$933.82.

In addition, there is a children's benefit paid to the custodial parent of a child whose parent is collecting CPP-D benefits.

CPP-D denied my application. Can you help me appeal?

Depending on the reason for your denial, we may be able to help. Keep your denial letter handy and give us a call.

The Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation has told me to apply for CPP Disability benefits. What should I do?

You should apply. I get a lot of calls from people receiving benefits from MSDSI who are very worried because of this request.

MSDSI expects people to apply for any possible sources of income. This can mean applying for CPP Disability benefits. However, it is important to know that CPP and MSDSI have very different definitions of disability. As long as you complete an application to the best of your ability and submit it within a reasonable amount of time, your PWD benefits should not be affected by a CPP-D denial.

ASHLEY SILCOCK IS AN ADVOCACY ACCESS ADVOCATE.

To make an appointment with an advocate, please call:

Local: 604-872-1278

Toll Free: 1-800-663-1278 



SUPPORT DABC

BECOME A DABC MEMBER

Numbers matter. The more members we have, the stronger our voice in the community.

Please become a Disability Alliance BC (DABC) member today. You can be a voting member or a non-voting member, and we welcome both individuals and groups.

I accept your invitation to join the DABC and enclose my membership fee of \$15 (individuals) and \$25 (groups).

I am also including a tax-deductible donation of \$_____. (Donations over \$10 are tax deductible).

Please return your payment/donation with this form to:
DABC, 204-456 W. Broadway, Vancouver, BC V5Y 1R3.

You can also become a member or donate online at:
<http://www.disabilityalliancebc.org/supportadvertise.htm>.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR INVALUABLE SUPPORT

Please check the applicable boxes:

☐ New membership or ☐ Renewal

☐ Voting Member or ☐ Non-voting Member

Voting members are people with disabilities and self-help groups where at least 50% of members have a disability.

Name _____

Organization _____

Address _____

City/Prov _____ Postal Code _____

Phone _____ Email _____

ABOUT US

Our mission is to support people, with all disabilities, to live with dignity, independence and as equal and full participants in the community. We champion issues impacting the lives of people with disabilities through our direct services, community partnerships, advocacy, research and publications.

FRONTLINE SERVICES

Our Advocacy Access Program provides one-on-one assistance with provincial and federal (Canada Pension Plan Disability) income supports and other benefits. Our Tax AID DABC program helps PWD and PPMB recipients to file their income taxes year-round.

PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

Our projects respond to community need and increase people's ability to participate and contribute.

MAKING NEW PARTNERSHIPS

We keep connected with a large network of community organizations across BC and regularly provide them with updates about issues of importance to the disability community.

FREE PUBLICATIONS

We publish a range of capacity-building self-help guides and advocate resources, in reader-friendly language. Resources are provided free of charge, either by mail or from our website.



A New Chapter with DABC

BY SALINA DEWAR

My name is Salina Dewar and, since April 2016, I have had the pleasure of being DABC's newest Tax AID DABC advocate. I would describe myself as a social justice advocate who has had an interest in rights and fairness since I was a child. When I was 13, I decided I wanted to be a lawyer, with the idea that I would find my way into human rights work.

I have Cerebral Palsy which primarily affects my legs, but has subtle effects in other ways. Even though I excelled at school and have found my way around most of life's physical challenges, it often seemed that I struggled in subtle, invisible ways.

I developed a keen sense of independence, but I have also had to do battle with anxiety. All of my experiences shaped my interest in wanting to understand, to connect with and to reach out to support others to achieve their own goals.

After confirming through experience that working in the legal field wasn't the best fit for me, I turned my attention exactly where I wanted to focus: non-profit advocacy work. If anyone had asked me a few

After confirming through experience that working in the legal field wasn't the best fit for me, I turned my attention exactly where I wanted to focus: non-profit advocacy work.

years ago if I would want to do work relating to income taxes, like many other people, I might have thought "Eeew, taxes!" As it turns out, tax advocacy is anything but boring or just about the numbers, and I couldn't be happier.

Some clients feel they've climbed a personal mountain just to get to the office with some of their tax slips. I really do understand where they have come from and have a good idea of the determination it took. Every time I can help them take an item off their to do list or access a bit of cash through their refund, I feel that what I do makes a difference.

Perhaps most importantly, when I provide clients with information about the Disability Tax Credit and the Registered Disability Savings Plan, I know I'm giving them information that can help them have a bit more financial control.

Any time I can give someone else a tool to support their independence, I know I am doing what I was meant to do. **T**

Janis of All Trades | BY JANIS WALSH

My first contact with DABC was in 2004 when I volunteered to answer the administration phone lines. I hadn't worked in a disability office environment before, but soon learned about common issues on callers' minds like the provincial and federal disability benefits.

After a while, I wanted to move to the Advocacy Access program reception because I'd be directly helping clients. Advocacy reception is constantly busy, with people reaching out for help and advice.

The Advocacy Line is the initial contact for many people who contact our organization. It's an important link to advocates who can help with benefits, programs and services. Our job at reception is to listen, provide help and relay messages to the advocates.

I was also asked to take on the task of data entry which now takes up most of my work hours. I complete reports and records of phone logs for monthly reports to funders. I keep open case files accessible and closed files stored. I recruit and train volunteers for our reception desk and developed a reception dialogue for volunteers.

For the busy Advocacy office to run smoothly (with a few bumps along the way), I connect with each advocate to keep the clients' scheduling available for the receptionists. I make sure clients are ready for appointment times and make any

needed scheduling changes so that reception is always up to date.

I also help with our Transition magazine that's mailed across the country four times a year. We have a core team of amazing volunteers with disabilities who I work with to bundle the magazines for Canada Post.

Access Pro Bono is a free legal advice clinic offered throughout the lower mainland, including at DABC, for clients on limited incomes. Lawyers volunteer their expertise outside of their busy practices to consult with clients who need their advice. I set up their appointments and keep in contact with the lawyer who comes to our office.

Occasionally, I go on a field trip. Disability fairs and functions invite us to have a table and promote DABC through our help sheets, pamphlets, magazine and posters. I can also add the personal touch of encouraging visitors to use our services and programs.

I find most clients are thankful to have someone acknowledge their story. I've met many grateful clients who are relieved to find the help that they were looking for to apply for programs and benefits they need. **1**

The Advocacy Line is the initial contact for many people who contact our organization. It's an important link to advocates who can help with benefits, programs and services.



Thank You to Our Amazing Volunteers

BY NICOLE KIYOOKA

DABC volunteers are at the heart of our organization. We would not function as well as we do without our large group of wonderful volunteers.

Not only do we appreciate our volunteers for their excellent work, but we are thankful for their kindness, generosity, humour and commitment. Their contribution to DABC makes a big difference and for this we are very grateful.

We do not say this nearly enough, but we want to thank all of our amazing volunteers for their time and dedication to DABC! We would like to recognize and thank the following volunteers:

Administrative Reception

Florence, Jill, Kam and George

Advocacy Access Reception

Allie, Carol, Joanna, Trace, Brianne and Sketch (her canine office assistant)

Advocacy Access

Shirley

CARMA

Archie, Juvilyn, Kristine, Lorraine, Shannon, Victoria and Vince

Community Kitchen

Andrew, Chris, Ivy, Suud and Teresa

Transition

Aleadin, David, Florence, Tien, Trace, Lynda and Kam


Courier

Robert

Office Shredding

Dan

Swing into Spring 2016—Fundraiser

Adrianne, Christina, Gail, Jonathan, Luella, Pam, Tory, Veronica and all of our wonderful staff members, DABC friends and regular office volunteers who helped with the set-up and the event. 



A Big Thank you to Budget Printing

Budget Printing has been a great Friend to DABC, especially over the past few years. They have generously donated the printing costs of our annual year-end Fundraising letter which is a huge help to us. We count on a range of Fundraising sources and this wonderful support for these efforts is very appreciated.

Our thanks to Andrew Lau who gave a generous “yes” to this year’s request.

Join DABC's Visionaries Circle

To promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.

Be part of our Visionaries Circle with monthly giving—the best kind of support you can offer.

Even a small amount goes a long way and provides a more stable funding base we can count on to plan and provide our programs and services.

Joining is easy. You choose how:

- You can set up monthly donations in seconds at www.CanadaHelps.org by searching for "Disability Alliance BC."
- Or, set up a monthly credit card donation by contacting Nicole at 604-875-0188.

Thank you for your support!



40th Anniversary Swing into Spring

Become a Swing Into Spring Sponsor!

Supporters of our annual Fundraising gala receive many perks with their sponsorship!

All levels of sponsorship receive:

- recognition by the emcee at the gala
- inclusion of your logo in the gala program and slideshow
- display of your logo on the DABC event page
- inclusion in our social media and promo materials

Sponsorships range from the Friend Level at \$500 to the Presenting Sponsor Level at \$6,000. All sponsorships (except for the Friend level) also include tickets to the event.

For full details on all of the wonderful sponsorship benefits, please contact Jody at 604-875-0188 or jody@disabilityalliancebc.org.

Early Bird Special

Book your sponsorship before January 15 and receive a Free 1/4 page Transition magazine ad worth \$650!



Basic Income for People with Disabilities | BY JANE DYSON

The government of British Columbia has committed to making BC the most progressive province in Canada for people with disabilities. Since introducing the Accessibility 2024 initiative, it has made several policy changes to accomplish this goal. These include the introduction of the Annualized Earnings Exemption (AEE), the first of its kind in Canada, and a significant increase to the allowable asset threshold for provincial disability assistance applicants from \$5,000 to \$100,000.

Sadly, despite these positive steps forward, thousands of British Columbians with disabilities live in poverty, including those receiving the Persons with Disabilities (PWD) benefit and those ineligible for provincial financial assistance. In addition to the dehumanizing existence that poverty ensures, the stigma of depending on a benefits system that, because of its design, necessitates an intrusive and largely undignified relationship with the state means that BC's citizens with disabilities do not feel like full and independent citizens.

Advocacy organizations whose mandate is to push for their constituencies to have the supports they need to live with dignity and independence, spend years communicating with government and other stakeholders in largely fruitless attempts to accomplish a reason-

How can we move forward and out of the perpetual cycle of poverty for British Columbians with disabilities and ensure that government and the community can together develop a progressive model of supports?

able rate increase. Government, for its part, typically takes the position that while it acknowledges the assistance it provides needs improving, the cost to taxpayers of doing so is very high and must also be a consideration. What is often not mentioned though, is that people with disabilities are also taxpayers, and despite abysmally low employment rates for people with disabilities, many work. This omission speaks to the stereotype of people with disabilities being a drain on the system, rather than a positive component of it.


So what can be done?

How can we move forward and out of the perpetual cycle of poverty for British Columbians with disabilities and ensure that government and the community can together develop a progressive model of supports—one that provides financial supports through a dignified process? A Guaranteed Income model has been debated for years by academics, government, and the various stakeholders that function within the social justice field. Disability Alliance BC (DABC), and some of our community colleagues have recently come together to start thinking about how this could work in BC.

Through its frontline work, DABC sees hundreds of people with disabilities every year whose needs are not being met. Not only their basic financial needs, but their social, emotional and spiritual needs. It is extremely difficult for people to focus on goals, dreams and the things that bring joy in life, if they have to constantly struggle to access the most basic needs in a system that makes them feel less than full citizens.

As DABC and its community partners move forward with this very new project, we hope to develop a proposal that will ensure British Columbians with disabilities are provided with adequate income supports through a new process. One that reflects the core belief that participants in the new system are full citizens who, with the right supports, will be able to develop and fulfil their goals, be it work, volunteering or engaging more in their communities. That they are no longer “benefits recipients,” or “living on benefits,” but are just Canadian citizens who live in British Columbia, the same as everyone else.

JANE DYSON IS DABC'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.

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Let DABC Help with Your Income Taxes—Year Round

Do you receive Persons with Disabilities (PWD) benefits or Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers (PPMB) benefits?

Do you know there are significant benefits to filing your income taxes?

Are you behind in filing your taxes?

Our program, Tax Assistance and Information for People with Disabilities (Tax AID DABC), provides free assistance with income tax filing for people who have not filed for multiple years. Please see details inside this Transition.

Since July 2015:

- we helped people with disabilities receive a total of over \$670,000 in tax refunds
- we helped people file 931 years of tax returns

Contact Tax AID DABC

Full details at www.taxaiddabc.org

Phone 604-872-1278

Toll Free 1-800-663-1278

taxaid@disabilityalliancebc.org



Tax Assistance & Information
For People with Disabilities

vancouver
foundation



we are all
connected

Suite 204, 456 West Broadway, Vancouver, BC V5Y 1R3
(604) 875-0188 • fax (604) 875-9227 • tty (604) 875-8835
trans@disabilityalliancebc.org • www.disabilityalliancebc.org



DABC's New Program

Help with the Disability Tax Credit (DTC) and Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP)

On September 1st, 2016, DABC, Plan Institute and the British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society (BCANDS) launched an exciting new project partnership with the support of the Vancouver Foundation. The goal of our new provincial initiative is to provide direct assistance to British Columbians with all the aspects of opening a Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP).

To make an appointment, please call 604-872-1278/1-800-663-1278 or email rdsp@disabilityalliancebc.org. And please visit www.rdsp.com to read more about this great new program.

vancouver
foundation



plan
INSTITUTE
for caring citizenship

dabc
disability alliance bc

Thank you to the Province of BC for their continuing support.

