transition





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If you would like more information about Planned Giving, please contact us at 604-875-0188 or feedback@disabilityalliancebc.org. We will send you DABC's Planned Giving information to review with your financial planner or lawyer, family and friends.

Learn More Online

https://disabilityalliancebc.org

Planned Giving Brochure https://tinyurl.com/4786ucme

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editorial

by Jana Husseini

When my husband Mustafa and I started to think about a family, we had so many questions. As a woman with spina bifida, could I be a mother? Could I even conceive? What about all the social and environmental barriers for someone living with a disability?

On top of all that, there were some prejudiced misconceptions that women with disabilities are not capable of having a family.

But, our desire for a child was strong. We talked and talked about our fears and our hopes.

When I went looking for answers, it was my family, friends and peers who are mothers who taught me the most. One friend, a mother with quadriplegia, walked the path of motherhood before me. She and other women I knew convinced me I could follow.

A Learning Experience for Everyone

I looked for community resources and supports for me and Mustafa. One of the best I found was the Spinal Cord Injury of BC Sexual Health Centre. So many of my questions about pregnancy and motherhood were answered. We were so grateful for their practical and respectful support.

One friend, a mother with quadriplegia, walked the path of motherhood before me. She, and other women I knew, convinced me I could follow.

On the day I learned I was pregnant with Malika, we were filled with joy. Our journey toward growing our family had begun.

Researching and navigating the health care system as an expectant mother with a disability showed me a lot. As an advocate, it showed me even more.

All along the way, I had to advocate for myself within a system that wasn't very prepared for a mother with disabilities.

On the other hand, I found many health professionals who were knowledgeable and compassionate. They wanted to find ways to support me, even when the system was not set up to do so.

My first pregnancy exam, for example, was done in a hospital rather than my gynecologist's office because she didn't have an accessible exam table. After having me as a patient, she got one.

I could not find any training specifically for mothers with disabilities, but I learned a lot from the Healthiest Baby Possible program for first time mothers.

What's Missing?

I would love to see more understanding of the needs of mothers living with disability, whether it is a physical, mental health or other kind of disability.

When I was in the hospital to deliver Malika, my gynecologist held a meeting for all of the staff who would be involved. She wanted to be sure they understood as much as possible about the care and support I would need.

A central hub for parents with disabilities would be wonderful. I was able to find many resources on my own, but a one-stop resource would be a great support to parents. There are so many things to understand from pregnancy, to delivery, to the legal steps, to taking the child home.

There were times I was completely overwhelmed. A hub could provide new parents with care before and after delivery, access to a peer group of moms, in-home support, information and referral, and counselling.

All along the way, I had to advocate for myself within a system that wasn't very prepared for a mother with disabilities.

The biggest gap for me was that I didn't have any support after the delivery. The care and professionalism I experienced during pregnancy and delivery was amazing. Post-delivery, the only outside support I had was an Occupational Therapist who made sure my bassinet was accessible.

After the delivery, I was very depressed. I was completely on my own with Mustafa. I wasn't ready to go home, but the hospital wanted me to vacate the bed.

Advice To Prospective Parents

If you are considering starting a family as a parent living with disability, I have these suggestions for you.

Be very informed about your own health. This includes your disability. Sometimes health professionals make suggestions that will not work for someone with your disability.

Be your own persistent advocate. You may not get all the information or support you need, unless you ask for it.

Research. Do your own research about programs and services, and talk to people. Peers are often the very best source for information and tips.

Educate everywhere you go. Chances are you will find many health professionals who do not know much about your disability, but are willing to learn.

In this Transition, you will read about how other people with disabilities are living and thriving as parents, even though we have all shared many of the same concerns and fears. We have also gathered lots of resources to help parents, no matter what kind of disability you may be living with.

We hope you find this edition helpful and even inspiring, whether you are already a parent or are considering starting a family.

JANA HUSSEINI IS AN ADVOCATE WITH DABC'S ADVOCACY ACCESS PROGRAM.

Jana's Resources

You'll see many parenting resources in this Transition. These are some that I found most helpful.

Spinal Cord Injury BC Sexual Health Centre https://scisexualhealth.ca

Pregnancy and Spinal Cord Injury Booklet

https://scisexualhealth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Pregnancyand-SCI-booklet-V7.pdf

BC Women's Hospital Maternal Fetal Medicine Program (for women with complicated pregnancies)

http://www.bcwomens.ca/ourservices/pregnancy-prenatal-care/ complications-in-pregnancy/maternal-fetal-medicine

Healthiest Babies Possible Program

http://www.vch.ca/locations-servic-es/result?res id=1332

MALIKA, JANA AND MUSTAFA





She Just Sees Me as Dad

I by Marco Pasqua

When I'm lifting my daughter up in the air pretending she's a plane or she's climbing onto my lap because she wants a ride around the house, I know everything is okay.

For as long as I can remember, I wanted to be a dad. But I was born with Cerebral Palsy, so I wasn't sure it would be possible.

I used to have a fear. I was afraid that, if I became a parent, my child wouldn't respect me as much as other parents without a disability. I thought they wouldn't see me as an authority figure because I use a wheelchair.

I remember sharing my fear about this years ago to one of my basketball teammates, Murray. He was a few years older than me, paraplegic and a father.

I'll never forget the look on his face. He smiled at me and said "Well, that's just silly." I said, "What do you mean?"

He replied, "I might not run and my daughter might be a lot faster than me. But, one thing I can tell you is

that, at the end of the day, she just sees me as Dad."

He wheeled off and I didn't think much else about it.

Flash forward to 2021. My wife and I are in the delivery room anxiously awaiting the birth of our first child. Everything is going smoothly until my wife starts to push. The machines she is attached to are making loud beeping noises, increasing in their intensity by the second. I hear the nurses whispering to each other. Something isn't right. There are complications.

Every time my wife has contractions, the heart-rate of my child slows down. All of a sudden, those fears I expressed to Murray all those years ago came flooding back in me. Not just the fear of my child not respecting me, but fear that my wife and my child may not make it out of the delivery room. Or, is my child going to be born with a disability like her father?

Twenty months later, I'm happy to say that my daughter is very happy and healthy. Getting to know Stella, I can tell you that I finally understand what Murray meant.

When I'm lifting my daughter up in the air pretending she's a plane or she's climbing onto my lap because she wants a ride around the house, I know everything is okay.

In those moments, my daughter doesn't see me as my disability, she just sees me as Dad.

A lot of our day-to-day routines have been made possible thanks to some adaptations we were able to make around the house. Stella's bedroom features an accessible crib that allows me to be eye-to-eye with her when putting her to bed. We even have curtain robots that are voice-activated and enable me to close her curtains without getting out of my wheelchair.

These adaptations have been lifechanging and have allowed me to be there for her, not only physically, but emotionally and mentally. She knows I do things a little differently, but none of that matters to her. I'm still the one that reads to her each night before she goes to bed, the one that makes her feel safe. Even if she isn't quite ready to go to bed.

So, my message to potential parents with disabilities out there is: if you're thinking about whether or not you can do this, you absolutely can. Don't sweat the small things. Parenting is a journey and you're on it together.

Know that you'll adapt as you go. At the end of the day, your child is just going to see you as Mom or Dad. Don't sweat the small things. Parenting is a journey and you're on it together.

To learn more about the adaptations that helped Marco, visit:

Tetra Society https://tetrasociety.org/

Technology for Living https://www.technologyforliving. org/ **1**

MARCO AND STELLA, AND HER NEW CRIB DESIGNED BY TETRA SOCIETY



I TRANSITION

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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The Right Fit is a multi-partner service designed to address the crisis in wheelchair accessible housing. We help match affordable, accessible homes and independent living supports with people who need them in the Vancouver region.

Need a Vacant Accessible Unit?

If you are a wheelchair user or an organization representing wheelchair users, please contact: Isabelle Groc, Right Fit Program Manager rightfit@disabilityalliancebc.org
https://therightfitbc.org/

Have a Vacant Accessible Unit?

If you are a housing provider in the public or private housing market, and have an accessible vacant unit, or you would like to learn more about our Accessibility Checklist, please contact:

Dalton Finlay, Project Manager / Navigator
Individualized Funding Resource Centre Society

RightFit@IFRCSociety.org

604-777-7576

Disability Alliance BC (DABC) is the Right Fit's sponsoring organization and oversees the program. The Individualized Funding Resource Centre (IFRC) is responsible for client management.

Digital Skills Help Parents Connect With Their Kids

by Austin Cozicar

Technology can unlock a world of possibilities for people with disabilities, from access to jobs, to keeping in touch with friends on social media. But some of the most touching stories from our Digital Literacy programs at Neil Squire are the connections parents with disabilities make with their children using their newfound technology skills.

Dad the Hacker

David, who has a spinal cord injury, joined Neil Squire's Distance Computer Comfort program after learning about it from Spinal Cord Injury BC. His questions were centered around security, wifi connectivity and routers for home use.

In the sessions, David learned how to use his phone more effectively and received tips on some technical aspects of his computer. He also became familiar with Zoom.

"It gave me knowledge I was able to pass along and make things better—not only for myself, but my family too," he said.

He now helps his kids with their technical questions. "I say, 'You guys are the ones who are supposed to know this stuff and be able to answer my questions.' Now they're coming to me for support with computers and wifi for their video games. They call me 'Dad the Hacker.'"

The Look on Her Son's Face

Lisa is a mother of three children who works three jobs. She has ADD, depression and anxiety, and works hard to manage her mental and emotional well-being.

Lisa needed to brush up on her computer skills to help maintain her employment, so she joined the Digital Jumpstart program.

Through the program, Lisa received a new laptop, keyboard, mouse and riser. She began lessons with Distance Training Coordinator Gordon Watt on topics including file management, computer maintenance, Microsoft Word, Google Lens and Google searching.

"I was kind of surprised. I thought I could Google," she says. She learned how to refine her searches such as finding events on specific days. "That was amazing."

Her favourite moments, however, came from learning how to use Microsoft PowerPoint to turn presentations into videos. She used her new skills to make a video for her son's birthday, chipping away a little bit each week, transferring photos from her phone and Google Drive, making all the details perfect.



She connected her laptop to the TV through an HDMI cable — something she learned how to do from Gordon — and played the video for her son.

"He loved it," she says. "The look on his face was better than any gift I gave him."

Visit <u>www.neilsquire.ca</u> to learn more about Neil Squire programs or call toll free at 1-877-673-4636.

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SPACE.



2022 Accessibility Project Grant Recipients

I by Danielle Gauld

DABC's Annual Accessibility Project Grants, promoting inclusion and accessibility for people with disabilities, are generously funded by BC's Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction.

We'd like to introduce our 2022 grant recipients.

You can learn more about this project and see our amazing past grant recipients at https://disabilityalliancebc.org/ program/accessibility-projects.

Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians - BC Affiliate (Kelowna/Provincial): \$27,919 for the Personal Response to Emergencies Project The Alliance will empower people who are blind, deafblind and partially sighted to confidently manage

BC Wildlife Federation (Surrey/ Provincial): \$28,782 for the Fishing Forever Project

their safety in various emergencies.

The BC Wildlife Federation, in collaboration with clubs across BC, will facilitate single and multi-day community-building events for people with disabilities and their caregivers. These events aim to be a fun day learning to fish with adaptive equipment, while learning about the importance of conserving fish habitat.

Community Arts Council of Vancouver (Vancouver): \$37,000 for the NeuroArts Collective Project

The Community Arts Council of Vancouver will encourage neurodivergent artists to take space in a neurotypical world and work collaboratively to dismantle invisible inequities in contemporary art spaces.

Greater Vancouver Association of the Deaf (Surrey): \$40,000 for the IBPOC Deaf Interpreter Training for BC Project

The Greater Vancouver Association of the Deaf will develop curriculum and provide training for Indigenous, Black and People of Colour (IBPOC) Deaf interpreters to help alleviate the current shortage in British Columbia.

Health Justice Society (Burnaby): \$40,000 for the "I Am a Person" Accessible Participation in Mental Health Public Policy Project

The Health Justice Society will remove barriers to community participation and art and support creative and accessible ways to use lived and living experience to inform mental health policy.



Italian Cultural Centre (Vancouver): \$39,879 for the Artists with Disabilities Exhibition Project

The Centre will host an art exhibition in collaboration with artists with disabilities and seek to advance their careers through a series of professional development workshops. The workshops will be

led by an IBPOC and Hard of Hearing emerging curator, and mentored under an experienced team of IB-POC and disabled curators and arts cultural workers.

Kinsight (Coquitlam): \$40,000 for the Real Talk: Building 2SLGBTQIA+ Community Project

Kinsight will work to increase access and decrease stigma for adults with cognitive disabilities in Metro Vancouver who are Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, or other sexual orientations and gender identities (2SLGBTQIA+).



Nidus Personal Planning Resource Centre Association (Vancouver): \$40,000 for the Learn, Access and Plan through Visual Storytelling Project

Nidus will make information about legal personal planning rights and options in British Columbia more accessible through visual education and storytelling techniques.

Powell River Educational Services Society (Powell River): \$39,720 for the SOAR Social Network Pilot Project

The Society will create and test drive a model for a safe, supported online site designed to promote friendships and social connections among adults with a lifelong developmental disability in the small towns of the Sunshine Coast and Comox Valley areas. This model is intended to be adapted and transferred to other rural communities across BC and Canada.

Sacred Wolf Friendship Centre (Port Hardy): \$40,000 for the Accessible Emergency Plan and Response Essentials Project

The Friendship Centre will provide accessible rural area emergency relief for people with disabilities through a collaboration of planning, preparation, readiness, education/training and essential needs kits.

WISH Drop-In Centre Society (Vancouver): \$40,000 for the Strengthening Engagement and Leadership of Women and Gender-Diverse Street-Based Sex Workers Project

The WISH Drop-In Centre Society will strengthen engagement and leadership of women and gender-diverse street-based sex workers with disabilities within WISH and

in external advocacy efforts. Their aim is to increase accessibility and deepen disability justice across the organization and in multi-stakeholder initiatives.

Yarrow Intergenerational Society for Justice (Vancouver): \$33,200 for the Intergenerational Chinatown Disability Advocacy through Arts Project

The Yarrow Intergenerational Society for Justice will deliver a series of advocacy and arts workshops by and for disabled Chinese people across generations.

DANIELLE GAULD IS THE ACCESSIBILITY PROJECT GRANTS COORDINATOR AT DABC. SHE LIVES WITH CHRONIC PAIN AND ILLNESS, AND IS EXCITED TO BE WORKING IN AND WITH THE DISABILITY COMMUNITY.



Becoming a Mom on Wheels

I BY MARJORIE AUNOS

anuary 5, 2012 was my birthday. Not my real birthday, but my second chance. On a country road, my car slid on black ice. It only took a few seconds. I became paraplegic when I sustained a Spinal Cord Injury at a T2 Level.

As a single parent, my last thought before impact was for my son Thomas, who was only 16 months old at the time.

I knew right away my life would no longer be as it was. I was scared I couldn't be the mom I had dreamed of being.

But, I knew parenting with a disability was possible. I knew this because, as a psychologist, I had seen hundreds of moms and dads with an intellectual disability do it. The determination and love they had shown had inspired me to become a single mom by choice.

Surely, I thought, they could also inspire me to fight through every internalized ableist thought I had about my own parenting. Thoughts like, "If I can't run after him, how can I bring him to the park?" "How can I be a mom if I can't drive him to school or put him to bed or meet his teachers on parent-teacher night due to lack of accessibility?"

If I knew many moms with intellectual or developmental disabilities, I knew no one with a physical disability or mobility limitation who was a parent.

I had no mental images of how it could be done. I also had no idea how to parent at a distance, while I was six months in rehabilitation, and my son was being cared for by my parents.

My academic and professional knowledge of parenting with a disability also created a lot of insecurity. I knew the discrimination parents with intellectual disability face, the lack of inclusion and the over-representation in child welfare, often with a lack of evidence.

I knew I would need to advocate for myself as a parent, and for my child, at every stage of his development. My fears were validated eight months after my accident when the "Rocking the Cradle" report came out in the US. It looked at parenting with all kinds of disabilities and the disparities people face: poverty, lack of adapted housing, lack of resources and services that are accessible, negative and ableist attitudes towards their parenting, and sometimes custody battles and intimate partner violence.

To ensure I could be available for my son when he needed me, all the while learning about what my body could and could no longer do, we moved into a house with two apartments. My parents moved into one apartment so they could be nearby to help out.

For safety, my mom gave Thomas his baths, while I supervised and managed the whole endeavour. I would say, "Grandma, Thomas played in the sand today, so he needs us to shampoo his hair" and she would perform the task.

When he would wake up during the night, she would come down from her apartment, pick him up from his bed and hand him to me in mine. She would wait patiently while I cared for him. When he finally fell back to sleep, she picked him up from my arms and set him back into his bed.

As Thomas grew in physical autonomy, less and less co-parenting was needed. As I now parent a teenager, the support I require is what any other parent needs: strategies to deal with the rolling of the eyes!

No matter if our disability is the same or different, seeing other parents with a "different" stance normalized my reality and experience.

Since I didn't have another mom on wheels to learn from after my accident, I decided to write my stories. I wanted other women to see what it could look like.

I also produced an event called Amplifying Voices of Parents with Disabilities, so I could connect with other parents with disabilities. No matter if our disability is the same or different, seeing other parents with a "different" stance normalized my reality and experience.

Being part of a community of parents with disabilities has empowered me more than I can say. And, because finding services or supports in the community for parents with disabilities was hard to do while parenting a young child, I am working with some of my colleagues to ensure a resource guide will be available in the future. You can see a few of these resources on page 20.

I've now been using a wheelchair for eleven years. Eleven years of challenges and struggles, but mostly eleven years of happiness and memories. I am a mom on wheels and I am actively parenting my 12-year-old son.

Over this past decade, I have seen him grow into a beautiful young man who is kind, creative and social justice driven. He and I are the best team there is

Some Statistics

In Canada, 12% of women report a functional limitation (Statistiques Canada, 2018).

In Québec, it is estimated that 4.8% of families with a child under the age of 18 has a parent with a disability (Mercerat et Saïas, 2020). In the United States, the estimate is 6.2% (NDC, 2012) which is generally considered a huge underestimation. A third have a physical limitation.

You can purchase the book, Mom on Wheels: The Power of Purpose as a Parent with Paraplegia, at https://tinyurl.com/vrdv6b92.

MARJORIE AUNOS, PH.D. IS A SINGLE-MOTHER-BY-CHOICE LIVING WITH A SPINAL CORD INJURY. SHE IS A RENOWNED PSYCHOLOGIST AND RESEARCHER IN THE FIELD OF PARENTING WITH DISABILITIES AND AN AWARD-WINNING INSPIRATIONAL SPEAKER.



HOSTED BY MARJORIE AUNOS

Becoming a parent is a valued role in our society and one that is highly celebrated—except when you have a disability. Then, the first thing most people express is concern.

To envision a better future for these families, professionals need to be clear on what is possible and how we can make it happen.

This podcast's main audience is Child Welfare Workers. I want to show how parenting can successfully be done differently and to share research in the field of parenting with disabilities.

It also gives listeners the opportunity to hear from parents and from children of parents with disabilities.

Come hear about ways experts say we can best empower these families and let's all learn together about how parenting can be done differently.

https://cascw.umn.edu/portfolioitems/introduction-to-parentingdone-differently-parents-withdisabilities/

Connect with DABC

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.

Services and Programs
Our Advocacy Access Program provides one-on-one
assistance with provincial and
federal (Canada Pension Plan
Disability) income supports
and other benefits. The Disability Law Clinic provides free

legal advice to people with disabilities about human rights and discrimination. We also offer advice to people having problems with their disability benefits. Tax AID DABC helps people with disabilities living on low incomes to file their income taxes year-round. Access RDSP helps people with the Disability Tax Credit and with opening a Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP). The Right Fit Program helps to match affordable, accessible homes in the Vancouver region with people who need them.

Our programs and projects respond to community need

and increase people's ability to participate and contribute.

Growing Partnerships
We stay 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.



Become a 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).

You can also become a member or donate online at: https://www.disabilityalliancebc.org/about-dabc/become-a-member.

Please return your payment/donation with this form to: DABC, 1450-605 Robson Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 5J3.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR 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 ____

How to Support Us

If you support our work, please consider a one-time contribution or become a monthly donor. Our monthly donors help us to create a funding base we can count on.

Please visit our Support page at https://disabilityalliancebc. org/support-us for ways you can give.

Thank you for helping us continue our work on behalf of people with disabilities.



How Accessible Homes Support Parenthood

I by Isabelle Groc

When Manal asked her father which bus she should take to go to her business co-op training, Kashif Khalil knew what to do. As a former cab driver, Kashif is a navigation expert. He quickly figured out the bus his 16-year-old daughter should take, accompanied her to the bus stop and made sure she got on the right bus.

Kashif was able to help his daughter because he had just moved into a fully accessible home in Surrey with his wife, Subul, his two daughters and his son. As a wheelchair user, Kashif can easily get in and out of the home, and be the father his children are expecting him to be.

"The kids see their father as a provider," Subul says. "When we moved here, it helped rebuild Kashif's relationship with his children."

This was not always the case.

After Kashif was diagnosed with Progressive Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) in March 2019, his condition rapidly deteriorated. He was no longer able to safely move around the small two-bedroom basement suite he rented with his family, since they had moved from Pakistan a few years before. The suite was not accessible, with three steps to get into the backyard and a few more to access the entrance of the home. Kashif tripped and fell

frequently. He could not use the shower on his own. His wife and children needed to support him with all aspects of his life.

Subul asked the landlord to make modifications so the house would be more accessible, but the owner was not receptive. Instead, they illegally increased the rent by nearly 40% in four years.

As the relationship with their landlord further deteriorated, the family looked for another option, but struggled to find an affordable accessible home. They contacted BC Housing, but no housing was available.

"We had nowhere to go because the prices were not in our budget," Subul says. She was forced to quit her job as a pharmacist to care for her husband full-time. "How could I leave him like that? It was painful for us as a family," she says.

They gave up on finding the right home for them. "We were not even thinking of getting an accessible house. We just wanted to get any house that was in our budget, a house where we could sit and plan what to do next," Subul recalls. "There was nothing in front of me. It was all dark."

They decided to move to another non-accessible two-bedroom unit, but their daily life became even more challenging. Kashif could not use the wheelchair inside the unit due to narrow corridors. Someone had to open the front door for him so he could get out of the building.

"Accessibility is an umbrella term for a lot of things that he can do now as a parent-being on his own and letting the kids be on their own," Subul says.



The housing situation impacted the entire family. The children's school grades were affected. "Since he was not independent, he kept calling the kids for help. They had to leave their books and go make tea for him," Subul says. "The kids were helping their father, but when they needed something from him, he could not help them which made him feel sad," she says.

BC Housing connected the family to the Right Fit Program. Our program aims to address the crisis in affordable, wheelchair accessible housing. We help match accessible homes with people in the Vancouver region who need them.

Program navigators identified a three-bedroom accessible one-level townhome with a roll-in shower that would be a perfect home for Kashif's family.

As soon as they moved in, their life dramatically improved. Kashif can now fully access all the rooms in the home and he has regained a sense of independence. "I can go to the kitchen, make my own tea, warm up my food, grab cookies. I can go outside with my wheelchair without help," he says. Kashif is also able to garden, enjoy a barbecue on the patio and socialize with neighbours.

The children are also enjoying more freedom. "They can invite friends home and can focus on homework without any interruptions when their dad needs help," Manal says. "It is nice that we don't have to worry as much." Subul notes that the children's grades have improved since they moved into the accessible home.

Kashif can also share parenting responsibilities again. "Accessibility is an umbrella term for a lot of things that he can do now as a parent—being on his own and letting the kids be on their own," Subul says. "As individuals, we can focus more and as a family we are more connected."

oving into an accessible home has also allowed Sahar Dashti to become the mother she wanted to be for her two-year-old daughter, Elsa. Sahar is a cancer survivor and has been a wheelchair user since she was 19 years old.

When she arrived in Vancouver in 2018 with her husband Ali as refugees from Iran, they rented a non-accessible converted garage in a private backyard in Burnaby. The space was so small that Sahar could not bring her power wheelchair inside the home and constantly had to rely on her husband for support.

The situation became even more challenging when the couple had their first baby, Elsa, who was born in June 2020. "I felt I couldn't be a good mother for her," Sahar says. "I couldn't do anything for her. Sometimes when Ali was at work, I would be crawling like a snake on the floor with the baby in my arms to go from the sofa to the bed. It was very hard."

Shortly after Elsa was born, the family's support worker contacted the Right Fit Program for help in finding an accessible unit. It took only a few months for Right Fit navigator Dalton Finlay to find a fully accessible two-bedroom ground floor unit in



IOTOS BY ISAB

"I can get Elsa's food ready, I can wash her clothes, and I know she is safe," the 46-year-old mom says.

White Rock. Once the family moved in, Sahar gained the independence that she needed to be a parent.

"I can go everywhere in the house with my wheelchair. I can get Elsa's food ready, I can wash her clothes, and I know she is safe," the 46-year-old mom says.

For example, when Elsa is crying, Sahar can now take her on her wheelchair and move around in the house to calm her down or go outside for fresh air. "Before when she was crying, I would just sit and cry with her. But now, I am always thinking of what I can I do to help her."

For more information about Right Fit, please visit: https://therightfitbc. org.

ISABELLE GROC IS THE RIGHT FIT PROGRAM MANAGER AT DABC.



HELAINE BOYD
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DABC has opened up our office, offering both in-person and remote appointments. In-person services are available by appointment only.

Here is the contact information for our core programs—to book your appointment or ask about the services and support we can provide.

Thank you for your patience and stay safe.

How to Access DABC Services

Advocacy Access

If you need help with provincial disability benefits or CPP Disability, contact Advocacy Access:

advocacy@disabilityalliancebc.org

604-872-1278 or 1-800-663-1278 (Toll-free)

Tax AID DABC

If you are a person with a disability who needs assistance filing your income taxes, contact Tax AID DABC: taxaid@disabilityalliancebc.org
236-477-1717 or 1-877-940-7797 (Toll-free)
Book an appointment online at https://disabilityalliancebc.org/

Access RDSP

If you need help with the Disability Tax Credit or Registered Disability Savings Plan, contact Access RDSP: rdsp@disabilityalliancebc.org

604-872-1278 or 1-800-663-1278 (Toll-free) https://www.rdsp.com/supports-and-services/

direct-service/file-income-taxes/tax-appointment/

Disability Law Clinic

Our Disability Law Clinic can help with legal issues related to disability rights:

lawclinic@disabilityalliancebc.org 236-427-1108

Learn More About Us

https://disabilityalliancebc.org/

Programs and Services https://disabilityalliancebc.org/programs/

Core Program Brochures https://disabilityalliancebc.org/category/publications/brochures/

New Accessible Changing Station

A gender-neutral accessible changing station is now open at Kwantlen Polytechnic University's (KPU) Surrey campus. It's among the accessibility improvements KPU continues to make at its five campuses.

"It's really significant because it's definitely sending the message that KPU cares about accessibility, and making sure that our physical spaces are accessible and welcoming to everyone," says Dr. Fiona Whittington-Walsh, lead advisor on disability, accessibility and inclusion at KPU.

The changing station, located on the first floor of the Fir building, is equipped with an overhead electric lift that can safely transfer wheelchair users to either the toilet or the adjustable change table.

Elevators and washrooms have been modernized, hands-free doors have been installed, additional curb cuts have been added to parking lots and lighting has been upgraded.

Accessible workstations and desks have also been added to most classrooms at all campuses, and a wheelchair ramp redesign is nearly complete in Richmond.

Future plans include additional accessible height water fountains and a web-based map highlighting accessibility features of the campuses.



"Universal design creates spaces that are fully accessible for everyone. This fosters a strong sense of belonging and inclusion."

Learn more about Kwantlen Polytechnic and their commitment to accessibility at www.kpu.ca.



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www.neilsquire.ca/digitaljumpstart









From Marjorie Aunos

Books for Children Mama Zooms by Jane Cowen-Fletcher

Dad has a Wheelchair by Ken Jasch and Anita DuFalla

Mom Can't See Me by Sally Hobart Alexander

We Move Together by Kelly Fritsch and Anne McGuire

Some Days: A Tale of Love, Ice Cream and Mom's Chronic Illness by Julie A. Stamm

We Can Go Anywhere: My Adventures on Daddy's Chair by Glen Dick

Books for Everyone Else Mom on Wheels: The Power of Purpose as a Parent with Paraplegia by Marjorie Aunos, Ph.D.

We've Got This, anthology by Eliza Hull

Maternity Rolls: Pregnancy, Childbirth and Disability by Heather Kuttai

Disability Visibility: First-Person Stories from the Twenty-First Century by Alice Wong

Disabled Mothers: Stories and Scholarship By and About Mothers with Disabilities by Gloria Filax and Dena Taylor: https:// www.goodreads.com/book/ show/50671472-disabled-mothers

Podcasts, Interviews, Media Interview with Ing Wong Ward and Alice Wong: "Did your mommy have a wheelchair in her mommy's tummy?" https://disabilityvisibilitypro-ject.com/2018/12/01/dvp-interview-ing-wong-ward-and-alice-wong/

A short film about fathers with intellectual disabilities: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pNe133YO5S0

Reeve summit webinar: "An Insider's Guide to Pregnancy

and Paralysis": A conversation between a mom with a spinal cord injury and the doctor who followed her through her pregnancy: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DUuqQ4kZxrU. Also see http://DanisTwinsFilm.com.

Facebook Groups
Irresponsible Father's Guide to
Parenting
https://www.facebook.com/bbcscotlandnews/videos/253331215501830/

Disabled mums (Australia) https://www.disabledmums.com/

Diversability Community
https://www.facebook.com/groups/
diversabilitycommunity

Parents with disabilities https://www.facebook.com/groups/859674774209180

MobileWOMEN https://www.facebook.com/groups/257147710969355

Adaptive Equipment/ Resources

Adaptive Parent Project's aim is to "provide an all-inclusive resource and a central hub to connect parents with disabilities to one another as well as professionals in various specialties."

https://www.adaptiveparentproject.org/

Through the Looking Glass: Supporting people with disabilities through all stages of life https://lookingglass.org/

Advocacy Resources
Disabled Parenting Project
https://disabledparenting.com/

Disability Visibility Project https://disabilityvisibilityproject. com/2019/07/27/ep-56-parenting/ amp/

Disability, Pregnancy and Parenthood: A Resource on Parenting with a Spinal Cord Injury https://www.disabledparent.org.uk/

BC-based Organizations

Spinal Cord Injury BC

Spinal Cord Injury BC (SCI BC) is dedicated to helping people with spinal cord injuries and related disabilities and their families to adjust adapt and thrive.

SCI BC has an in-depth program devoted to parenting with a disability. The Sexual Health Resource Centre offers information on parenting, female fertility and pregnancy, and male fertility. The Centre looks at common questions and concerns about parenting and spinal cord injury, adaptive equipment, resources

and peer support networks to help make your transition into parenthood smoother.

SCI-BC also offers a Sexual Health Rehabilitation Service staffed by five Sexual Health Clinicians and a Sexual Medicine Doctor. This is a specialized service unique in Canada.

The goal of this service is to facilitate the sexual health rehabilitation of clients and their families through medical intervention, education and emotional support; to provide education to health care providers, students and health care consumers; and, to lead in advanced research initiatives that will develop our knowledge of sexuality and disability.

https://scisexualhealth.ca

Tetra Society of North America

Tetra Society's focus is to find solutions to environmental barriers faced by people with disabilities.

Tetra recruits volunteers who work with clients to design and build assistive devices that are custommade for the individual. These devices are either not available commercially or cost-prohibitive.

As a non-profit organization, Tetra raises funds to deliver this program, including covering the costs of volunteer travel and materials for devices up to \$500 per project.

Over the past 30+ years, Tetra volunteers have built devices that support:

- communication
- eating and drinking
- completing household chores and personal care
- mobility

If you are looking to find or adapt a device to resolve a particular problem for yourself or someone else, you can complete Tetra's Request for Assistance form. You can find the form and instructions for completing it at https://tetrasociety.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2022/09/TetraRFA-2022.pdf.

Learn more about Tetra at https://tetrasociety.org/ or call 289-208-2315.

Technology for Living

Technology for Living (TIL) provides Environmental Control Systems that assist people with high level physical disabilities to control devices in their homes and on the go. Some of these devices include TV (audio/video) control, smartphone/tablet access, lamp/fan control and door openers.

If you'd like to talk with a technician before applying, please call TIL at (604) 326-0175. Learn more at: https://www.technologyforliving. org







Contact Tax AID DABC for Free Income Tax Assistance

SPECIALIZING IN MULTIPLE YEARS OF RETURNS

Program Manager I Disability Alliance BC taxaid@disabilityalliancebc.org https://taxaiddabc.org

Book Your Appointment Online

You can book your remote appointment with DABC online at http://disabilityalliancebc.org/direct-service/file-income-taxes/tax-appointment/. We also offer our services by email and mail. Please send your tax slips and photo ID to taxaid@disabilityalliancebc.org. We will contact you for follow-up.

Tax AID DABC helps people with disabilities in BC to file their income taxes. Please see details on the opposite page for our eligibility criteria.







CONTACT THE TAX AID REGIONAL PARTNER NEAREST YOU

- METRO VANCOUVER & FRASER VALLEY I VANCOUVER I DABC | 236-477-1717 | Toll Free 1-877-940-7797
- INTERIOR | KELOWNA | Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society | 250-763-4905 ext. 215



Yes, our income tax services are FREE.

Am I eligible for Tax AID DABC services?

We provide free tax-filing support to people receiving disability supports including: Persons with Disabilities (PWD), Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers (PPMB), Canada Pension Plan Disability (CPP-D), WorkSafeBC (WCB) or the Disability Tax Credit (DTC). We also assist individuals with income below \$35,000 and those with family incomes below \$42,000.

What if I Haven't Filed Taxes for Years?

We help prepare simple income tax returns for the most recent tax year, as well as for previous years. One of our specialties is to help people who have multiple years of taxes to file.

What if I Don't Have All My Tax Documents (T5007, T4s)?

Don't worry! We'll contact government agencies to help you find them.

My Income is Low. Why Should I File Taxes?

There are many advantages to filing your income taxes! Our clients usually receive \$400 to \$600 in income tax credits for each year they file. People eligible for an income tax refund, and those with dependent children, often receive much more.

If you haven't filed your taxes for multiple years, your refunds may grow dramatically.

Other benefits you may be eligible for include:

- **GST Credits**
- BC Sales Tax and Climate Action Tax Credits
- Canada Workers Benefit
- Child Tax Benefits
- Registered Disability Savings Plan Grants and Bonds

Income tax filing can also help you qualify for MSP Premium Assistance coverage, subsidized housing, and other income-tested benefits.

New Drop Off Service

Have all of your tax slips ready? If you are living in Vancouver and your tax situation is straightforward, you can now drop off your tax information to our advocates for faster support. Bring in your ID and tax slips to our office. You can pick up your package when your taxes are ready.

What Should I Do Next?

Contact Disability Alliance BC or one of our Regional Partners. We'll set up an appointment to meet with you. Call us today! We're here to help.

CONTACT THE TAX AID REGIONAL PARTNER NEAREST YOU

- VANCOUVER ISLAND I VICTORIA I Together Against Poverty Society I 250-361-3521
- NORTHERN I PRINCE GEORGE I Active Support Against Poverty Society | Toll-Free 1-877-563-6112



New Access RDSP Project Targets Youth

BY AUDREY DEUTSCHMANN

ello! My name is Audrey
Deutschmann and I'm DABC's
new Vancouver Island Community
Engagement Specialist.

I'm responsible for a new project that targets youth on Vancouver Island. I'm excited to be promoting programs that benefit the long-term financial well-being of people with disabilities. My background in disability work as a sister, advocate, and advisor has given me insight into the challenges we face.

We can't foresee everything the future will bring, but one thing will always be certain: financial stability is a powerful asset no matter what life throws at us.



We can't foresee everything the future will bring, but one thing will always be certain: financial stability is a powerful asset no matter what life throws at us.

Planning for a financial future when you have disabilities can be a daunting prospect. Resources are scarce and services often seem unsympathetic. However, there are government programs that can help.

One of these programs is the Registered Disability Savings Plan which DABC promotes through our Access RDSP project, in collaboration with the British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society and Plan Institute.

The RDSP is a powerful financial and future-planning tool for those with disabilities, with the government making lifetime contributions of up to \$90,000 for those who set up an RDSP by age 49. It's a way to prepare for retirement years well in advance.

Unfortunately, there are a lot of misconceptions about RDSPs. Many people who would benefit from them are missing out on the opportunity they present. A 2020 survey showed that less than one third of eligible people under the age of 59 have opened an RDSP.

Our new community engagement program focuses on that deficit

on Vancouver Island by connecting with young families (children aged 19 and under) through a multi-faceted approach. By offering workshops, providing one-on-one supports and promoting RDSP awareness to front-line service providers, Access RDSP is reaching out to parents, educators and health care providers.

I know that planning for the future when you or a family member has a disability can be scary. Disability supports don't always protect us from poverty and retirement seems a long way off.

As the advocate for a brother with disabilities, I share those concerns. RDSPs are designed to support people with disabilities in their retirement years when they are less likely to have parental support still in place. It's a great comfort to me knowing that my brother will have a safety net if anything happens to me.

If you'd like more information on the RDSP in general, whether you're on Vancouver Island or not, phone or email our helpline at info@rdsp.com or 1-844-311-7526).

If you're on Vancouver Island and connected to youth services or know a youth who might benefit from an RDSP, you can reach us directly at rdsp@disabilityalliancebc.org or 1-800-663-1278.

Transition Magazine | Spring 2023



Yes, I'd Like to Donate to DABC

Your support will help us continue our advocacy and frontline support of people living with a disability.

- ☐ \$50 will contribute toward the cost of matching a disabled family with accessible housing
- ☐ \$100 will help fund disability education workshops for doctors and social workers
- ☐ \$500 will support legal representation for a person with a disability who has experienced discrimination

Other \$_____

How to Donate

You can donate by cheque or online by credit card. You can choose to make a one-time or monthly donation. We will send a charitable tax receipt for any donation over \$10.

Cheque donations can be sent to our office, along with this tear off donor form. You can make a secure online credit card donation in seconds at <u>CanadaHelps.com</u>. Or, call us at 604-875-0188 and we will help you make your donation.

You can also support our work with an annual membership fee. Memberships are \$15 for individuals and \$25 for groups. Join at https://disabilityalliancebc.org/support-us.

Thank you for your support.

Marching Strong

I by Amanda Harrinauth

I know, I have always been different.

Normalcy was never an option.

At the age of 26, I earned my heroes cape.

When I opened my heart to the possibilities, I was able to save the day.

I have Autism, a unique gift.

Sometimes it may look different to others, but if so I don't want to be the same.

I want to play by my own rules, and create my own games.

I have released and let go of the shame of what it means to be different.

Those of us with Autism we are heroes, our hearts shine bright to the call to love one another.

As we stand together we are brave and strong.

April is national Autism month so, we will keep marching strong.

Amanda Harrinauth is a poet, author and life coach with disabilities, including vision impairment, hydrocephalus and autism. She believes poetry has healing properties. http://www.poetmandy.com/



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A thank you in our e-newsletters, for one year

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Sponsors can design their own banner ad or we will design it for you at no charge.

We can also design interior pages for you from text and graphics you provide.



Other Benefits of The Disability Tax Credit (DTC)

You may know that being approved for the Disability Tax Credit (DTC) can enable you to open a Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP). But did you know about the other benefits and credits it can help you access?

Contact DABC's Access RDSP Staff at Local: 604-872-1278, Toll-free: 1-800-663-1278 or rdsp@disabilityalliancebc.org.

If you're employed

The DTC will allow you to claim:

 Up to \$713 through the supplement to Canada Workers Benefit (CWB)



If you have children

The DTC can help you claim:

• The Disability Amount for Children



- The Child Disability Benefit amount of \$2.886
- Increased child care deductions
- Age limit extension to Children's Fitness and Art amount (no longer available after 2016, but may be claimed for the previous year)

If you have a trust

The DTC might help you save on the taxes you pay on your earnings through:

- Eligibility for qualified disability trust status
- Preferred beneficiary election option

If you own a home You may be eligible for:

- Home Buyer's Amount of up to \$5,000! People with DTC do not have to be first-time home buyers
- The Home Accessibility Tax Credit, which covers certain expenses concerning accessibility-related renovations



If you have medical or caregiver expenses

The DTC can allow you to claim:

- Certain medical expenses (can also claim a Disability Supports Deduction)
 e.g. Attendant Care Services
- Caregiver Credit: People with DTC do not have to provide another supporting document from medical practitioners

If you're a full-time student

The DTC can allow you to claim:

 Certain education-related benefits, such as the \$500 Scholarship Exemption



www.rdsp.com







Program and Project Funders

BC Community Gaming Grants

BC Housing

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Law Foundation of British Columbia

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Provincial Employees Community Services Fund

TELUS Employees Charitable Giving Program

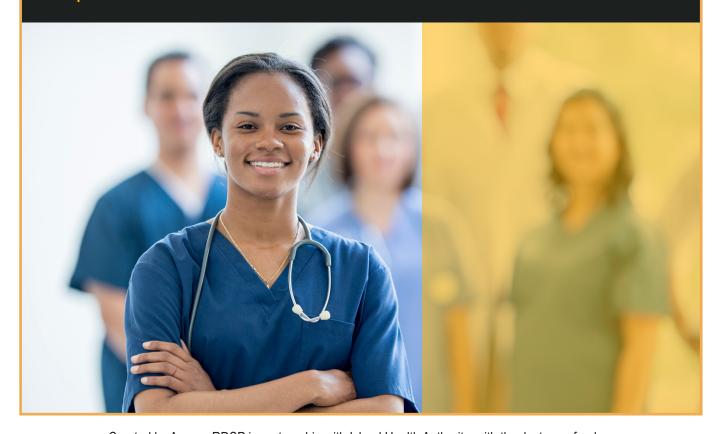
And generous donors like you!

We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Province of BC and BC Housing.





A PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE TO THE DISABILITY TAX CREDIT



Created by Access RDSP in partnership with Island Health Authority, with thanks to our funders BC's Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction and the Vancouver Foundation. Download the booklet at: https://disabilityalliancebc.org/1-a-practitioners-guide-to-the-dtc-rdsp/







vancouver foundation



we are all connected

Suite 1450, 605 Robson Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 5J3 (604) 875-0188 • fax (604) 875-9227 transition@disabilityalliancebc.org • disabilityalliancebc.org

O V E R

YEARS OF ADVOCACY

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

