

access ABILITY

Participation. Independence. Empowerment.

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smd
WINTER 2008



Cool as Ice

Ian Dmytriw is playing hockey on ice – just like his two brothers – for the first time, thanks to a new sledge hockey program organized by the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities (SMD).

Ian is 13 years old, a paraplegic since infancy. He underwent open heart surgery days after his birth. During the surgery, a blood clot traveled to Ian’s spine, partially paralyzing his legs. His disability is unique – most kids in wheelchairs have a disease like muscular dystrophy, while most paraplegics are adults, injured in vehicle or work accidents.

The players in the newly-formed Sledge Hockey Manitoba only have a few practices under their belts, but Ian has already discovered he has unique advantages. “I’m young and I’ve been in a wheelchair since birth. A lot of the other guys have been in a car or work accident, and they don’t have as much upper body strength. It’s easy to get by them.”

Ian’s fellow players are a co-ed group of about 15 individuals, ranging in age from 13 to late 40s. “Our mission is to be inclusive for all age groups and all abilities,” says Bill Muloin, Supervisor for Children’s Leisure Recreation and Life Skills at SMD and one of the organizers of Sledge Hockey Manitoba.

Muloin is excited about the new sledge hockey program because, he says, “I don’t think we had enough options for people with disabilities in terms of a team sport opportunity on the ice except for curling. This is a new niche for the province.”

For Ian, sledge hockey isn’t just another sport – it’s the family game. His father, Gord, worked for the Manitoba Moose for three years and his two brothers both play hockey. For the past four years, Gord has coached Ian’s brothers’ hockey teams; now he’s coaching Ian’s hockey team. “It’s always been hockey hockey hockey,” Gord explains, “and Ian hasn’t had an opportunity to participate in the same way as the other boys. Now, all of this stuff he’s watched his brothers go through, he’s doing it and there’s absolutely no difference.”



Ian Dmytriw is playing ice hockey – just like his brothers – for the first time with SMD’s new sledge hockey program. Photo Credit Doug Little.

Sledge hockey is played by the same rules, on the same ice as regular hockey. In fact, the sledge hockey team is currently practicing and playing at the MTS Centre through the Community Use and Access Program, which makes the Centre available to community groups free of charge. Ian says, “It’s fun going on the ice and skating around, going really fast.”

Bill Muloin wants all the players to have as much fun as Ian, and that means upgrading their equipment. SMD has 16 sledges left over from a discontinued sledge hockey program in the 1980s, but they are difficult to use. “The new sledges are compact and easy to manoeuvre,” Muloin explains. “The old sledges are harder to move along the ice, so if an individual doesn’t have the greatest upper body strength they can get turned off from the sport.” With the support of Hockey Canada, Muloin has obtained 12 new sledges.

As Muloin is planning for a sustainable sledge hockey program, Ian is making plans of his own. “If by some miracle I get really good, I could try out for the Canadian team and play in the 2020 Olympics.” •



SMD Makes Independence Easy

Making the transition from high school to university is challenging for many young people. It's especially hard when starting university means moving away from your small home town and getting to know a new city. Just imagine adding cerebral palsy to the mix.

Danielle Otto is 17 years old and completing her final year of high school. She knows that next year, she'll be facing several challenges – moving away from her home in Thalberg, north of Beausejour, starting university, all while negotiating the extra hurdle of cerebral palsy. She signed up for the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities' (SMD) Independence for Youth program last summer to develop the skills she needs to meet those challenges.

SMD's Independence for Youth program offers young people aged 16 to 21 the opportunity to live independently in Winnipeg for one week. For Danielle, the week was packed with new experiences. "I'm kind of a rural farm girl and haven't spent a lot of time just hanging out in downtown Winnipeg so that's what I did," Danielle says. "I went to the art gallery and did some touring around U of W because that's where I want to go to school."

Danielle is planning her move to Winnipeg and university with greater confidence since completing the Independence for Youth program. "Now I've had the experience of having to fend for myself, having to go grocery shopping and all those kinds of experiences that I probably wouldn't have otherwise. It won't be a total shock to me when I have to do things for myself."

Moving away from home and living independently can be daunting, but Danielle also found her experience in the Independence for Youth program exciting. The highlight of her week wasn't one particular event. "The best thing was the chance to do absolutely anything I wanted, eat what I wanted and go where I wanted to go. That's the point, being independent."

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SMD's Independence for Youth program gave Danielle a glimpse of the "real" world of adulthood – and that's just what she expected from SMD programming. Danielle first got involved with SMD at the age of seven, when her mother, Judy, learned about SMD's Summer Access program. The Summer Access program gives children with disabilities the opportunity to go to the summer camp of their choice in Manitoba, accompanied by a summer support person.

"Without summer access I wouldn't have had the opportunity to go to camp when I was a little kid and be more integrated in the real world with 'normal'



Danielle Otto looks forward to independent living after high school, thanks to skills she learned through SMD. Photo Credit Doug Little.

people and kids my age," Danielle explains. "It's given me the opportunity to be less segregated than I would have been otherwise."

Based on her experience with Summer Access and Independence for Youth, Danielle knows she can count on SMD to support her as she grows into adulthood and moves on to new experiences and challenges – and that's invaluable. "For youth with disabilities, you're getting older and want to be independent but you're not really sure what direction to take or who's going to help you with that transition into adulthood. SMD offers much needed support." •

Access to Success

Nicholas Ginter never stops talking, and his mother, Anita Schroeder, couldn't be happier. When Nicholas was two years old, Anita was concerned because Nicholas had not started talking yet. Her pediatrician referred her to the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities (SMD), and she was put on a waiting list. When a speech therapist finally contacted Anita a year later, Nicholas had begun to talk, but with a severe stutter.

"It was very hard to listen to him talk like that. He couldn't communicate with anyone properly, because he couldn't form the sentences," Anita says. Then Daniel Berube, a speech therapist from SMD's Provincial Outreach Therapy for Children program, started working with Nicholas and everything changed.

SMD's Outreach Therapy for Children program makes therapy services accessible to children age five and under across the province. For Anita, a working single mother of three, accessibility was important. "SMD comes into your home. A lot of times when you have kids you can't go out. If you want the services, you have them."

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Daniel and Anita work together to make Nicholas's speech therapy program a success. Daniel analyzed Nicholas's speech and designed a therapy program to reduce his stutter. Daniel's hour-long sessions every two weeks were supplemented by daily, twenty-minute practices Anita could do with Nicholas. "In the first week I could see a huge difference in Nicholas already," says Anita.



Nicholas Ginter is all smiles and no stutter after working with an SMD speech therapist. *Photo Credit Doug Little.*

For Anita, the rapid results were a great relief. Nicholas's stutter is hereditary; several of Anita's family members stuttered, and she received speech therapy for seven years in elementary and middle school. "I remember family gatherings and I thought Nicholas might be like that. He used to talk with his hand over his mouth and it was very hard to see him do that because he knew he sounded different than every other kid."

Nicholas has been receiving therapy for seven months now. "He very rarely stutters. If he does, it's almost normal for a kid his age," Anita says. Daniel continues to visit Nicholas at home once a month or as needed. Anita tracks Nicholas's progress from day to day and discusses any concerns with Daniel.

Nicholas is now four years old and will start preschool in spring. Anita is thankful for SMD's therapy services. "He's going to start where the other kids are. If there hadn't been a program like this, he would have started way behind. If they had had programs available when I was his age, I might not have had to spend seven years in speech therapy in school. He has the tools he needs and the confidence to succeed in school." ●

Dancing for Inclusion

In 1996, Hart Mallin was using a wheelchair after a car accident left him with two broken ankles, a broken knee and a shattered hip. Eight years later, he signed up for his first ballroom dance lesson. Today, he's a committee member for Dancing with Celebrities, one of the newest fundraisers for the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities (SMD).

Hart contacted SMD in 1996 to get a handicapped parking pass. A little over a year later, he had learned to walk again. He had also learned firsthand about the need for accessibility and inclusiveness in society. "For the period of time that I was paraplegic, washroom facilities and accessibility in public places were of significance to me in a way that others often don't have the opportunity to understand."

Volunteering for the Dancing with Celebrities committee combines two things Hart feels strongly about: dancing and inclusiveness.

"I started dancing with my wife to see if I was able to do it," Hart says. "I found it to be a sport that was socially and physically accessible." Hart and his wife, Pamela Bager, take lessons at Patricia's Dance Studio and Swing Club and that brought them back in touch with SMD.

Patricia's Dance Studio provides the professional dancers and coaching to keep the celebrities in step for their turn in the limelight. In addition, for the inaugural Dancing with Celebrities in 2006, a dozen couples from the dance studio, including Hart and Pamela, performed a ballroom dancing demonstration.

In 2007, Hart joined the Dancing with Celebrities committee. "A couple of us from Patricia's studio decided that we would volunteer. We're there to facilitate on behalf of SMD and on behalf of Patricia."

Hart is proud to be promoting dancing for the benefit of SMD. "It's focused on actually delivering services to a community that it encourages and enfranchises. I have a lot of respect for the consistency of the Easter Seals campaign and the ongoing contribution that it makes not only in terms of who it serves but in terms of how it teaches the rest of society to do things for others."

Inclusiveness and accessibility are behind a sponsorship campaign Hart has undertaken for Dancing with Celebrities. Hart is writing to individuals and businesses, asking them to be Volunteer Support Donors for the evening. Donors purchase a table of 10 and donate four or more seats for the dancers who volunteer their time for a ballroom dancing demonstration at the event.



Hart Mallin and his wife, Pamela Bager, practice their footwork at Patricia's Dance Studio, a proud supporter of SMD's Dancing with Celebrities. Photo Credit Doug Little.

"It's an attempt to be inclusive and sensitive to those who want to make a contribution," says Hart. "The couples in the dance group are making a contribution by performing, and the corporate community can come to the table and contribute the seats for the dinner."

Dancing with Celebrities is an annual dinner and dancing fundraiser for SMD. Local celebrities from media, business and politics partner with professional instructors from Patricia's Dance Studio to show off their moves in a ballroom dance competition. The 2nd Annual Dancing with Celebrities will take place on February 29, 2008 at the Delta Winnipeg Ballroom. Call 975-3084 for ticket information. ●

UPCOMING EVENTS

EASTER SEALS GREAT ESCAPE LOTTERY

Jan 7th – Feb 29th

Win \$125,000 in cash & prizes. Grand Prize: 2008 Cadillac Escalade or \$60,000 cash. Second Prize: Trip for 2 to Hawaii plus \$5,000. 25 draws of \$1,000.

All draws take place Friday, February 29th, 2008.

Tickets go on sale Monday, January 7th.

For tickets call: 988-3333 or 1-800-455-6439

For more info visit www.greatescapelottery.com to download an order form.

Thank you to Jim Gauthier & Air Canada for their generous support!



PAPER EGG CAMPAIGN

March 3rd – 23rd

For only \$2, you can show your spirit of community involvement and support by purchasing a Paper Egg at participating Sobeys, Macs, Saan, The Bargain Shop, and Giant Tiger.

All proceeds benefit children with disabilities and, just as importantly, all revenues generated in the province are used to support Manitoba-based programs and services.

For more information, please contact: 975-3084

Thank you to all our participating store sponsors.

