

access ABILITY

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INSIDE access ABILITY

- Employment Preparation Centre Works for Me! 2
- SMD Clearinghouse Helps Those Who Help Themselves 3
- All For One...Great Cause! 4

smd
SPRING 2008



It's a Bird! It's a Plane! It's an Easter Seals Superhero

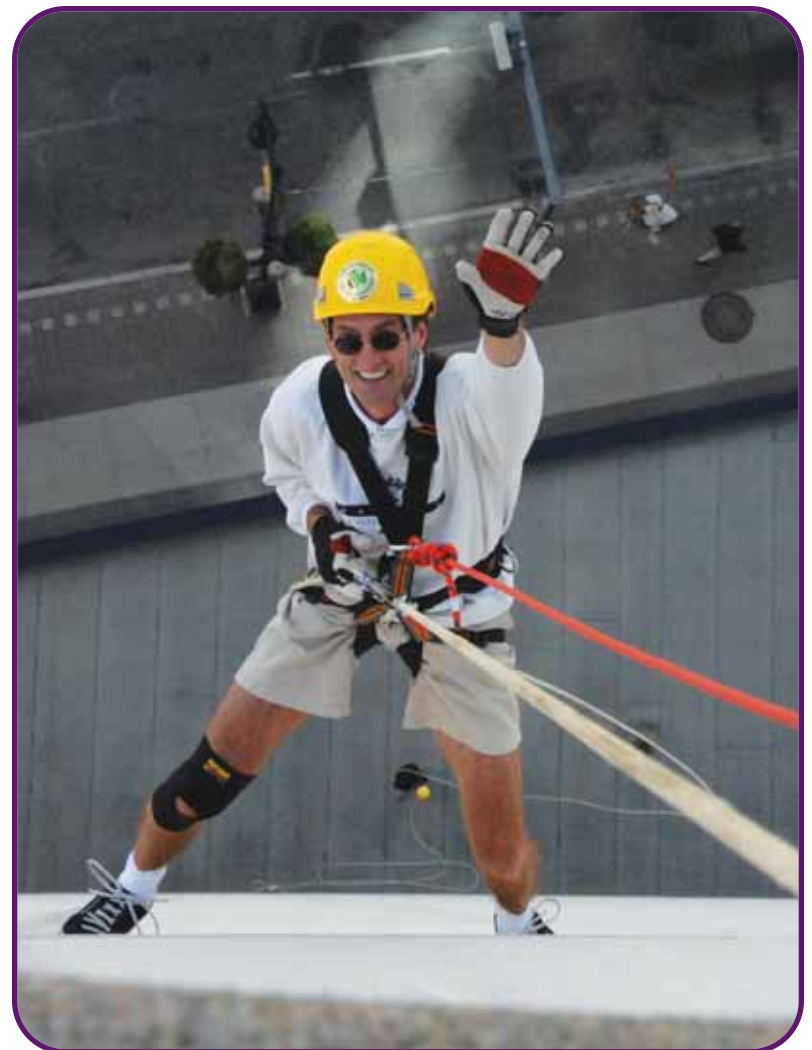
It's not very often you see someone hanging off the side of a seventeen storey building –especially someone who is terrified of heights. But that's just what Rheal Lesage did last August at the Easter Seals Drop Zone event to prove that individuals of all abilities can get involved and make a difference.

Easter Seals Drop Zone is an annual fundraising event for Society for Manitobans with Disabilities (SMD). In 2007, Rheal and 52 other brave and dedicated "Superheroes" from Manitoba businesses, media and the community rappelled down the Royal Bank Building in downtown Winnipeg. All rappellers collected a minimum of \$1,500 in pledges to participate in this adventure of a lifetime. Rheal and his fellow Superheroes are members of an exclusive club of over 600 Canadians who have challenged their comfort zones to raise over \$1 million dollars for Easter Seals Canada and its provincial affiliates since 2005.

Rheal was inspired to take the plunge and overcome his fear of heights by his two beautiful daughters. "Morgan said she wanted to play piano for the children that were sick in the hospital," Rheal explains. "When I asked why, she said that they have nothing to do and no one to play with and she would like to do something for them. The Drop Zone event is my way of showing Morgan that I am doing my part for those less fortunate as well. It's my way of showing her that I care too."

Rheal not only conquered his fear of heights, he climbed to the top of the fundraising ladder. Rheal raised \$8,800 of the total \$82,000 in pledges solicited by Superheroes in 2007 for SMD and Easter Seals Manitoba. Every penny raised remains in the community to help kids and adults with disabilities.

Rheal is reluctant to take credit for his accomplishment. "I couldn't have done it without the support of my sponsors including The Super Thrifty Pharmacy Group, Arborg Pharmacy, Stonewall Pharmacy, Pine Pharmacy, Harris Pharmacy, and Falk Pharmacy. As well as the support I received from the courteous staff at SMD." In Rheal's opinion, if he can be an Easter Seals Superhero, anyone can. "All it takes

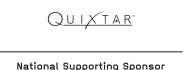


Rheal Lesage is all smiles and almost no hands as he scales down the Royal Bank building during the Easter Seals' Annual Drop Zone event.

is determination and persistence," he says. These qualities embody the spirit of the Drop Zone event and the community that Easter Seals and SMD support.

Not only did Rheal conquer his fear of heights, he can't wait to scale another tall building in Drop Zone 2008. "It allows me to make a difference in the lives of children and adults with disabilities," explains Rheal. This year, he has set a personal goal of raising \$10,000 in pledges. He looks forward to seeing both familiar faces and new ones when he joins the Superheroes for the thrill of a lifetime later this year.

Drop Zone 2008 kicks off on August 14. For more information visit www.smd.mb.ca, call (204) 975-3084 for pledge forms or email dropzone@smd.mb.ca



Employment Preparation Centre Works for Me!

They say what goes around, comes around – and it couldn't be more true at Society for Manitobans with Disabilities (SMD), where investing in people leads to people investing in SMD. Just ask John Tanner, whose relationship with SMD spans more than 30 years as a consumer and a volunteer.

John has a rare genetic disability called arthrogryposis multiplex, which affected the development of his hands and feet. He uses an electric wheelchair supplied to him by SMD Wheelchair Services in 1999. It's just one of the SMD services John has accessed over the years.

"I came to SMD for preschool in the early 1970s for physio and occupational therapy," he says. "Later on I took an evaluation at the SMD Employment Preparation Centre to figure out what interested me most in a job."

The Employment Preparation Centre (EPC) provides employment assessment, training and support to individuals with disabilities. The EPC assists SMD consumers like John to identify their goals and obtain and maintain employment.

Through EPC, John completed a Vocational Assessment Program to identify occupations that would suit his interests, skills and abilities. The assessment evaluates an individual's interests, learning aptitudes, manual dexterity, perceptual ability, physical abilities and employment potential.

For John, the assessment led him to volunteer with SMD Foundation, a position he has held for twelve years and counting. He volunteers three afternoons a week for SMD Foundation, assisting staff with fundraising activities including special events, lotteries and direct mail campaigns. John proudly tells anyone who asks, "This is my job."

"John is a real go-getter and a very nice person to work with and talk to," says Armando Versace, Marketing Manager at SMD Foundation. "If anything needs to be done, he's right there for you."

Tiffany Monkman, Resource Coordinator for SMD says that a volunteer like John is an invaluable asset to the organization. "He's reliable and dependable and someone you can count on. Those are important qualities in a volunteer."

John originally decided to volunteer at SMD because of his long relationship with the organization. He has stayed because he enjoys the atmosphere and his coworkers. "Since I started here, I've met people that I've become very good friends with." I feel like part of the group. Knowing that I can help makes me feel good too."

I FEEL LIKE PART OF
THE GROUP.
KNOWING THAT I
CAN HELP MAKES ME
FEEL GOOD TOO.

Over the years, John has received many volunteer awards for his commitment and hard work. "John has put in over 5,000 hours as a volunteer at SMD and shows no sign of slowing down," says Tiffany.



John Tanner has been a part of the SMD Foundation for 12 years.

If you would like to join John and our many dedicated volunteers, please contact Tiffany at (204) 975-3023.



SMD Clearinghouse Helps Those Who Help Themselves

“We would be lost without the Clearinghouse,” says Sandra McKay, Executive Director of Autism Society Manitoba (ASM).

Autism Society Manitoba has been a member of Society for Manitobans with Disabilities (SMD) Self-Help Clearinghouse since the Clearinghouse was established in 1990. The Clearinghouse was created to support self-help organizations – groups of people with a shared experience (like having a child diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder) who come together to provide support for each other.

“At the time, self-help organizations in Manitoba were basically operating out of their homes,” explains Natalie Mulaire, Chief Operating Officer of SMD Self-Help Clearinghouse. “They were all volunteers and their operations were too small to warrant funding from regular sources, so United Way, the Winnipeg Foundation and SMD created an organization to provide services to self-help organizations for them to sustain their operations.”

The Clearinghouse provides inexpensive office space and access to administrative support to its members. Mulaire and Gail Hillier, the Resource Co-ordinator, make up the Clearinghouse staff. Together, they provide consultative and administrative support to the 11 self-help organizations who are currently members of the Clearinghouse.

“Gail is wonderful,” says McKay. “They’ve helped us out at our annual conference and other events. And we’re able to go to Natalie for advice with issues we don’t have expertise in and draw on her experience.”

The strength of SMD Self-Help Clearinghouse is not only in Mulaire’s and Hillier’s support and expertise, but the community that has formed among the members, who represent interests as diverse as Down Syndrome, Arthritis and Huntington’s Disease. “It’s good to be part of an organization that represents self-help groups,” explains McKay. “Sometimes we can be swallowed up by big corporations or larger nonprofits. With a group of organizations that are the same size, we can share resources and bounce ideas off each other.”

**THERE’S ALWAYS
SOMEONE THERE TO
LEND AN EXTRA PAIR
OF HANDS IF WE
NEED IT.**

Autism Society Manitoba was formed in 1977 by a small group of parents whose children were diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Since then, ASM has grown to 400 members. ASM services include a resource library (housed within the



Natalie Mulaire extends her support and experience to self-help groups that service people with disabilities.

SMD library), support groups for parents and siblings of individuals living with ASD, social skills groups for young adults with ASD and advocacy services for parents seeking support for children with ASD.

As a self-help organization, ASM is member- and volunteer-driven. McKay is the only paid staff person, working part-time as Executive Director. For ASM and other Clearinghouse members, depending on member volunteers is essential to the self-help movement and a challenge. “There are times when the volunteer resources have reached their limit,” explains Mulaire, who is also a member of ASM. “They’ve worked enough and there are no replacements. If they’re in trouble, the Clearinghouse tries to step in and help as much as we can.”

ASM had doubled in size in the last five years alone due in part to better diagnostic tools. The Society is now extending its services beyond Winnipeg. “We’re setting up community connectors throughout the province,” says McKay. “We have one in Thompson and one in the Pas to help families with children newly diagnosed with ASD along the way.” As ASM continues to grow, McKay knows the Clearinghouse will be there to support them. “There’s always someone there to lend an extra pair of hands if we need it.”

All For One...Great Cause!

If someone were to ask you “What is Easter Seals Manitoba and SMD Foundation?” Would you know the answer?

Easter Seals Manitoba is the provincial affiliate of Easter Seals Canada. SMD Foundation raises funds for Manitobans with disabilities through activities conducted under the Easter Seals Manitoba banner.

Fundraising is essential to maintain, expand and improve SMD programs and services that many Manitobans with disabilities depend on.

Everyone knows someone with a disability. It may be a friend, neighbour or family member. It may be someone with a physical disability as a result of a birth defect or an injury. It may be someone with an invisible disability such as Fibromyalgia. It may be someone very young or an older person who has developed an age-related disability. Easter Seals Manitoba and SMD provide many programs and services to people with disabilities.

A disability can occur to anyone at anytime. Chances are you'll need the support of SMD. One in 7 Manitobans has a disability. When individuals with disabilities and their families are looking for services and support, SMD makes sure they aren't alone.

SMD programs and services reach approximately 40,000 people across Manitoba. With almost 150,000 individuals with a disability province-wide, it is essential that SMD continues to grow and strengthen to reach even more Manitobans with disabilities.

SMD encourages community involvement to create change in the lives of Manitobans with disabilities. The commitment of individuals, businesses and communities to SMD ensures that the impact of disabilities is diminished and the barriers to individuals with disabilities are removed.

SMD's success relies on the support of Manitobans. SMD Foundation conducts several lotteries and special events throughout the year to raise awareness and give Manitobans the opportunity to ensure vital programs and services are available when they're needed most. Many individuals also choose to support SMD through annual and planned giving, major gifts or endowments.



The fun staff at SMD Foundation ho ho hopes to hear from you soon.

To make a difference in the lives of Manitobans with disabilities, contact SMD Foundation at (204) 975-3108 or visit www.smd.mb.ca for more information.



**1 in 7 individuals
has a disability.
Share in the spirit of
Easter Seals Manitoba & SMD**

**Give generously
975-3108 or
1-866-282-8041**

