

# access ABILITY

Participation. Independence. Empowerment.

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# smd

WINTER 2009



## Small Wonder Takes Big Steps

When Kyla-Alexis Bailey travelled to Bermuda nearly two years ago, the ambitious young Winnipegger had no idea the routine family visit would jumpstart a philanthropic research adventure in the name of disability awareness – but that’s exactly what happened.

After watching her two wheelchair-dependent uncles battle with accessibility – particularly in the area of parking – the 11 year old Kyla-Alexis brought her frustrations back to Winnipeg and started thinking of ways she could affect change in her own backyard.

“It was really hard for me to watch people abuse handicapped parking spaces and my uncle had nowhere to park,” says the soft-spoken Grade 6 student. “So I came back here and heard about the science fair and decided to see what I could do.”

With the help of some local businesses and her very supportive mom, Crystal, Kyla-Alexis stationed herself next to a strip mall’s handicapped parking stalls for one week with a sign that indicated she was watching to ensure everyone who used the reserved spaces had proper permits – and proper reason – to do so.

The following week the intrepid youngster took to her post again, this time without her sign and armed solely with a watchful eye.

The results proved exactly what she thought they would – people were 25 times more likely to respect the parking spaces if they knew someone was monitoring them.

“It feels good that people are listening when they think they’re being watched because I thought most people just didn’t care,” she says. “It’s nice to know there are some people who want to respect (disabled) people and recognize it’s hard for them to get to places.”

Kyla-Alexis took her project to the Manitoba Schools Science Symposium fair, where she got an Honourable Mention and also caught the attention of Manitoba Science Council’s Dr. Heather Robinson.

Robinson referred her to the Youth Encouraging Sustainability Showcase at Oak Hammock Marsh,



With the ecological organization’s help, Kyla-Alexis developed her project further to suggest the environmental effects which could occur if fewer non-disabled Manitobans parked in designated spaces.

“She talked about how more disabled people would go out and there would be less idling of other vehicles waiting to pick them up if they knew parking would be available,” says mom Crystal. “They would be more independent, healthier and essentially reduce healthcare costs also.”

At the showcase, Kyla-Alexis nabbed a Platinum Award – given to students who receive 90 per cent or higher on their project – and is now thinking about ways she may be able to develop it further in the future.

The girl’s family and community say it is encouraging to see such a bright young mind working so hard for something she believes in.

“It’s her passion,” Crystal says. “Just about everything she does, she’s passionate about. It makes me proud she does it regardless of what anyone else thinks, too. She wants to help people and raise awareness. She just runs with her heart.”



# Barrier-Free Accessibility

Since its creation, SMD has provided services and programs to meet the needs of Manitobans with disabilities. These programs and those provided by countless other Manitoba organizations have resulted in one of the most supportive networks in Canada. We have much to celebrate and be thankful for.

Yet, despite our efforts and the fact Manitoba and Canada have recognized persons with disabilities as a protected class in human rights legislation, people with disabilities continue to encounter obstacles to their participation in community life. Many of these are longstanding obstacles that could have been easily removed years ago, while other barriers are new.

So why do these barriers continue to exist? Why are the needs of such a fast-growing part of our population being ignored? How many more lifetimes need to pass before the human rights of people with disabilities are recognized through action, not just words?

The Canadian Human Rights Commission concluded in its 2002 annual report that the methods and approaches available to enforce human rights have proven to be inadequate – and this has not changed. The human rights complaints system works by eliminating obstacles one at a time, or “ramp by ramp.” And this is not the best way to achieve a barrier-free and inclusive world.

SMD believes it's time to adopt a different approach – one that is rights-based and systemic in nature; an approach which, like the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, exalts a strong, unyielding belief in the rights of all peoples.

To that end, we are proud to be part of the newly formed Barrier-Free Manitoba, a non-partisan, non-profit initiative working towards the enactment of effective, standards-based legislation. In the past year, Barrier-Free has pulled together nearly 80 distinct interest groups and organizations to form the largest accessibility coalition in Manitoba's history.

Over 500 Manitobans with a disability, as well as their family and friends responded to an invitation from Barrier-Free Manitoba to tell about the barriers they face on an everyday basis. Some of these barriers are obvious: getting through a door or being unable to conduct a job search because advertisements are not available in alternative formats. But many barriers are not so obvious and affect processes, communication and attitudes in a system-wide manner.

Manitobans with disabilities are not able to participate in day-to-day activities in a way that many of us take for granted. The exclusion of persons with disabilities and the barriers impeding their participation in activities of daily life, in education and in employment remain widespread. The whole world does indeed shrink.



Some progress has been made in the province, however SMD and Barrier-Free Manitoba believe that full accessibility will only be achieved in a timely manner through accessibility-rights legislation which includes the development and enforcement of clear and mandatory standards that apply across the public, private and non-for-profit sectors.

Accessibility-rights legislation is simply about enforcing the basic human rights that are already established in law for Manitobans.

Both SMD and Barrier-Free Manitoba think the time has come for the Province of Manitoba to enact strong and effective legislation that requires the removal of existing barriers and prevents the creation of new ones.

For more information, please visit [www.barrierfreemb.com](http://www.barrierfreemb.com).

**barrier-free**  
MANITOBA

# Giving Back - A Lesson in Life

For the past 2 summers, a group of local motorcycle enthusiasts have taken to Manitoba highways for a very special mid-August journey. The Winds of Change 1000K Charity Ride has provided participants with the opportunity to enjoy some incredible Manitoba landscapes while raising funds and awareness for SMD Foundation/Easter Seals™ Manitoba.

The event's 1000km route offers a unique experience to local riders with a whole weekend of 'traditional biker style' riding including an overnight campout at the end of day one. "We cover a large, diverse area of the province" says Kevin Small, event founder and owner of Agri-Tel Transportation Inc.. For Kevin, that is just the beginning of the unique Winds of Change experience.

Kevin organized the inaugural event in 2008 in honor of a young man named Kyle Peters. Kyle's father Donny has been an integral part of the Agri-Tel family for almost a decade. Back in 2007, Kevin approached Donny and asked him what organizations were important to the Peters' family. Donny spoke of SMD and the seeds for the event were planted. The inaugural event, The Kyle Peters 1000K Ride, raised over \$10,000 for SMD Foundation/Easter Seals™ Manitoba. In year 2, the newly named Winds of Change 1000K Ride topped that, raising over \$11,000 for the organization.

From its inception, the ride's proceeds have supported the recreational programming offered through the organization including SMD's Manitoba Power Wheelchair Hockey League (MPWHL). Kyle Peters, a hockey fan through and through, plays defense in the league.

When Kevin Small created this event, he believed that he could make a difference. And he is sure to share that sentiment with Winds of Change participants. "I make many references (throughout the weekend) to what the ride is all about...that they are making a difference."

For Kevin, it is the Peters family that has inspired him to give to SMD. It is his own life experiences that have fuelled his personal perspective on disability.

"I have had some fairly serious accidents which have landed me in the hospital", Kevin explains. "I think a lot about having had the ability to get better and wonder how it would feel to (have a disability) and know you



Kyle Peters (L) plays defense for SMD's MPWHL.

cannot". Those thoughts are in-part what inspired Kevin to speak to Donny back in 2007. "They have faced a lot of challenges" says Kevin of the Peters family. "To have good health is a priceless gift."

Kevin Small created Winds of Change as his way of giving back, of removing barriers and opening doors for Manitobans of all abilities. He shares SMD's belief that with the right support, anything is possible.

In discussing his other reasons for giving back, Kevin has his own children in mind. "They do not yet understand giving of their time to help someone else while expecting nothing in return" Kevin explains. When asked how one can share the importance of giving? "Leading by example and doing", explained Kevin. 2000km later, he and his fellow riders continue to do just that.

For information on this or any other SMD Foundation/Easter Seals™ Manitoba local fundraising initiative, contact Andrew @ 975-3084 or email [specialevents@smd.mb.ca](mailto:specialevents@smd.mb.ca)



The 2009 Winds of Change Riders, August 22-23.

# SMD - In Your Community

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