

access ABILITY

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INSIDE access ABILITY

Expanding Services for Hearing Impaired Newcomers to Canada 2

Local Hockey Players Shine on National Stage. 3

Easter Seals Million Deals Lotto Launch 4

smd

FALL 2009



One Man's Gift of Giving Has No Boundaries

Imagine you read a story about a young child in need.

What would you do?

For Al Johnston, it was a no-brainer. He sprung into action and not only contacted the proper authorities but also advised his nephew of the situation. A little while later, Al's nephew adopted the little boy. That was over 30 years ago. The boy who we will call "Kenny" has cerebral palsy and utilizes his wheelchair to fully participate in activities. Kenny now has a girlfriend and stays in contact with Al and his wife on what's happening in his life. Knowing that Kenny is happy makes Al feel good inside.



I had the privilege of sitting down with Al recently and was amazed by all of the unselfish deeds he has performed over the years. I was so touched by his genuine and kind spirit that I felt compelled to share his inspiring stories with you.

In the 1950's, Al was introduced to the challenges that disability presents when his son developed Polio. His son could not walk and needed medical attention. After being approached by two Shriners, he took his son to the Shriner's hospital for an operation. Al was so grateful for the Shriner's help that he joined their organization as part of the Khartum Komediens in 1964. His joy was entertaining children with disabilities as a clown. According to Al, "we all have a purpose in life. For me, volunteering has been a labour of love."

Al has been a loyal supporter within the community, giving his time and financial resources for more than 40 years. His reasons for giving are quite simple. "I give to charity and in particular SMD because individuals with disabilities need our support. I know first hand how a disability can affect your life. I'm grateful to have the opportunity to give back and never expect anything in return."

Al is not only a devoted volunteer but his commitment to his wife Esther spans 62 years. His love for her is evident by the twinkle in his eye when he speaks about her. Esther began utilizing the Parking Permit Program administered by SMD when she developed vertigo about eight years ago. Since then Al has taken an active role in notifying drivers that park without a pass by issuing a friendly warning notice on their windshield. Al is strongly opposed to people taking advantage of these designated spots and believes the service he provides delivers the message much gentler than a fine by city police.

Even now at the age of 82, Al prides himself on having his calendar full of places to go and people to help. He can still be seen shoveling snow or cutting grass for his neighbors in need. To him, it's just a way of life and although he has slowed down a bit, he has no intention of stopping his giving ways anytime soon!

**"I know first hand
how a disability
can affect your life."**



**1 in 6 individuals
has a disability.
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Expanding Services for Hearing Impaired Newcomers

SM D Foundation/Easter Seals™ Manitoba has formed a new and exciting partnership with RBC Foundation to screen the hearing of newcomers to Winnipeg.

RBC Foundation has donated \$15,000 for the purchase of audiology equipment for SMD's Ethno-Cultural Program staff to perform hearing screening tests on newcomers immigrating to Winnipeg.

Established in 1997, SMD's Ethno-Cultural Program is the only program of its kind in the country and is the central intake of newcomers with disabilities for who English is a second language and/or where there is a problem communicating in English.

The Cultural Facilitators of SMD's Ethno-Cultural Program assist adults, children and families living with disabilities that come from a variety of ethnic communities connect with much-needed social, educational and employment services and supports.

Currently, SMD provides services in fourteen languages, Filipino, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Mandarin, Lao, Hindi, Punjabi, Portuguese, Croatian, Bosnian, Serbian, Amharic and Tigrigna.

Holly Toupin, RBC's Regional Vice President Central Winnipeg Market, commented, "RBC believes that full inclusion of individuals with disabilities is in the best interests of our communities. We are proud to support a program that helps create employability and remove barriers to education for people with disabilities."

Early detection of hearing impairment or deafness is imperative for an individual's integration into our Canadian community. Screening will enable SMD staff to immediately assist all hearing impaired or deaf newcomers to be equipped with the proper assistive technology (hearing

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SMD Foundation/Easter Seals Manitoba COO, Maria Marrone accepts \$15,000 cheque from John Marques, RBC Branch Manager.

aids). As well, SMD staff provides the proper direction to enable individuals to learn English or ASL (American Sign Language). The commitment by SMD benefits individuals with disabilities and their families by helping to reduce the barriers to integration, education and employability.

Newcomers, especially refugees to Canada undergo an extreme level of cultural stress. This level of stress is increased if the individual has a disability. The Refuge Hearing Screening Project provides individuals with the immediate assistance they require to enable them to communicate and function in our society. This project is a very unique opportunity, in that there is no other program like it in Canada. Together RBC Foundation and SMD are instrumental in generating lasting social change.

If you or your organization would like to partner with SMD Foundation/Easter Seals™ Manitoba by making a major gift please contact 975-3108.

“LOCAL HOCKEY PLAYERS SHINE ON NATIONAL STAGE” -SMD HOSTS NATIONAL EVENT FOR THE VERY FIRST TIME!

Like so many other Canadians, hockey has always been a big part of Matthew Ferguson's life. He's been a fan of the game for as long as he can remember. "Growing up in a hockey family, the passion for hockey is in my blood" says Ferguson. And like many of us, he has dreamed of playing the game from a very young age.

So in 2003, when Matthew first found out that SMD was starting a Power Wheelchair Hockey (PWH) program here in Manitoba, it was nothing short of a dream come true. The sport, which follows much of the same rules as ice hockey, provides individuals of all abilities with the opportunity to enjoy our country's most treasured game. "I was ecstatic!" Ferguson remembers learning of the leagues inception 6 years ago.

And now, after years of playing in goal against local teammates in the SMD League, Ferguson and 33 other Manitoba PWH players can add the title of Provincial Team Member to their list of accomplishments!



On July 31st, some of Canada's best PWH players rolled into the University of Manitoba for the 2009 Canadian Electric Wheelchair Hockey Association Championships! And while Matthew and many of his teammates had tasted tournament competition before, (in 2008, SMD sent a team down to the Power Hockey Cup in Minneapolis), competing in their own national championship tournament has been an experience like no other!

All weekend long, the U of M Investors Group Athletic Centre was filled with passion and competitive energy as teams competed for the honor of hoisting The Allied Cup. The trophy, awarded every 2 years to Canada's top PWH team, is housed year round in the Hockey Hall of Fame in Toronto. When the final buzzer sounded on August 2nd, the Calgary Selects had prevailed as National Champions.

When asked what it has been like to represent Manitoba on the national stage, Ferguson put it simply, "It felt amazing...it was truly incredible!"

And while Manitoba did not come away with the championship, Ferguson knows that this won't be his last campaign to capture the cup. He looks forward to growth for this exciting sport in Manitoba and will be increasing his own commitment to the league wherever possible. "It would be great to have more practice times...and a (larger) venue such as the University."



For now, he looks forward to continuing league play here at home in hopes of competing again for the Allied Cup in 2011. And while reflecting on how this hockey dream has come to be, Ferguson uses one word to describe how he feels- "speechless!"

SMD's PWH League plays September to June out of the St. James Civic Centre.



Manitoba Moose coach Scott Arniel drops the ball at the opening ceremonies!



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