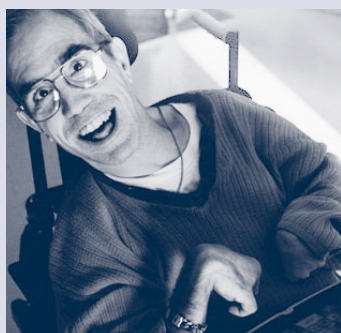


# member NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER FOR MANITOBANS WITH DISABILITIES

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## Come & See SMD

**There's a lot more to SMD than you might realize**

If you're a person with a disability living in Manitoba, you might know SMD as "the one to go to for wheelchairs" or "the Parking Permit place."

However, there is a whole lot more to SMD than the Parking Permit Program and Wheelchair Services. SMD is actually a 'family' of six interconnected organizations. While each organization has a distinct role to play in meeting the needs of Manitoba's disability community, they are all united by a single vision: *"a community that supports the independence, participation and empowerment of persons of all abilities."*

### SMD Alliance

As the head of the SMD Family, SMD Alliance is responsible for creating a strong and unified organization. SMD Alliance defines the overall strategic direction for the entire organization, coordinating actions to meet the needs of the disability community in the most effective, efficient, relevant and responsive manner possible.

SMD Alliance, by virtue of its incorporation federally, also has a broader mandate and is able to provide services on a national level. One example of this is found in SMD's involvement with the Canadian Health Network (CHN). To provide information with a more nation-wide perspective for CHN, SMD works with Easter Seals and March of Dimes organizations in New Brunswick, Ontario and Saskatchewan.

### SMD AbiTech

SMD AbiTech plays a unique role as a national research and development centre. SMD AbiTech works with individuals and organizations in both the public and private sectors as they create new technological tools that enable people with disabilities to live with greater independence.

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## Fast Facts about SMD

- *SMD's roots go back as far as 1946, with the creation of the Cerebral Palsy Parents Council and Winnipeg Kinsmen Club opening a treatment centre at the Winnipeg Children's Hospital.*
- *There are currently 13 different member organizations sharing space and resources through the SMD Self-Help Clearinghouse.*
- *The Ethno-Cultural Program offers services and support to ethnic communities with information available in as many as 14 different languages.*
- *Last year, over 31,000 Manitobans were issued special parking permits through the Parking Permit Program.*

### SMD Services

SMD Services offers support programs designed to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities. From education and work training to counselling and therapy programs, the professionals and volunteers of SMD Services connect people with the resources they need to become more active in their community.

### SMD Foundation

The SMD Foundation raises funds through two signature campaigns; Easter Seals and March of Dimes. Since 1949, Easter Seals has raised millions of dollars to assist children with physical disabilities, while the March of Dimes campaign – which began in Manitoba in 1951 – has raised millions more to support adults with disabilities as they strive to live independently.

### SMD Ventures

SMD Ventures is a fundraising arm of SMD, enhancing the long-term sustainability of the entire organization by raising funds to supplement revenues. The funds raised through business partnerships, joint ventures and financial investments are channeled back into SMD, supporting programs and services that benefit the disability community.

### SMD Self-Help Clearinghouse

SMD Self-Help Clearinghouse was established to provide support to self-help organizations, helping to maximize budgets by sharing resources – everything from office space and equipment to administrative support. This type of approach is vital to the very existence of several organizations that might not otherwise have the operations budget to sustain an office presence within the province.

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## the SMD vision & values

***At SMD, our vision for Manitoba is that of "a community that supports the independence, participation and empowerment of persons of all abilities."***

As we work towards achieving this vision, our actions are guided by our core values:

- Empowerment**... of persons with disabilities
- Independence**... as a principle of well being
- Participation**... in all areas of society
- Community**... for support and growth
- Prevention**... of disabling conditions
- Holism**... as a model for service
- Dignity**... in all matters

# NEWS & NOTES

## Hear, Hear!

SMD Alliance recently conducted a much needed review of Manitoba's Hearing Aid Act, putting forward several recommendations to the Provincial government. The recommendations focused on making the Hearing Aid Board more accountable to the public.



## Funds Get an Assist

Recognizing the important role that assistive technology can play in the lives of people with disabilities, SMD Foundation recently topped up its endowment fund for assistive technology to \$500,000. Technological items required by SMD consumers will be...

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Of equal importance is the potential for collective advocacy among the 13 organizations at the SMD Self-Help Clearinghouse. Many of the organizations share common agendas on public policy issues. By working together and harmonizing their voices, these organizations have an opportunity to present a united front on issues, thereby increasing opportunities for success and change.

The entire SMD Family is further supported by a six regional offices which enable SMD to deliver a variety of services to even the furthest of Manitoba's rural communities through partnerships with local businesses, educators and related programs. In addition, partnerships with various national organizations deepen the pool of resources available, enabling SMD to access the most up-to-date information on disability issues.

## Members and Volunteers Matter

The greatest strength of the entire SMD Family is its people. Just as each individual organization strengthens SMD as a whole, staff and volunteers who contribute their time and expertise are vital to improving the lives of people with disabilities.

Both staff and volunteers do more than deliver programs. They provide insights based on personal and professional experience. They relate to people with disabilities as individuals with specific problems, feelings and concerns. They do this because the staff and volunteers at SMD usually have a connection to the disability community – as a friend, relative or person with a disability themselves.

This connection to the disability community is also instrumental in defining SMD's continuing role. Through its staff and volunteers, SMD is able to keep in touch with the realities of today's disability community, directing programs and strategies to ensure that needs are truly being met.

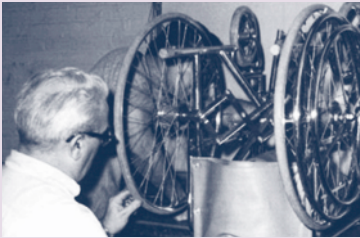
## What You Can Do

When you volunteer your time to SMD, you're lending your knowledge, abilities and voice to help others in the disability community. When you become a member of SMD Alliance, you're offering your insights and voice to the entire SMD Family. You can begin making a difference by calling (204) 975-3018 and inquiring about how you can become a member of – or volunteer for – SMD Alliance today. ❖



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...purchased using the interest from the newly-increased fund, leaving the principle intact and generating revenue for years to come.



## Spinning a New Web

Keep an eye online for the new and improved SMD websites. The new sites will feature simplified navigation and more reference materials to provide the most-up-to-date information on disability issues – and on the SMD Family – readily available and accessible for all.



# a letter from the CEO

As the CEO of SMD Alliance, I am often speaking to people about the importance of Alliance membership. I do so because SMD Alliance membership is about two things: building strength in numbers and maintaining responsiveness to the disability community.

SMD Alliance members represent the disability community because they are part of the disability community themselves. They are either people with a disability or have close ties to a disabled person. Alliance members have faced the challenges and barriers that exist. They have unique insights on disability issues that can only come with personal experience. That is what makes SMD Alliance members so vital to both SMD and to the entire disability community.

Our members keep SMD in touch with the realities facing today's disability community while helping our organizations plan for the realities of tomorrow. Our members help direct strategies and programming by identifying the real needs that exist. They have seen what types of programs are currently available, how those programs might be improved and where new programs should be developed.

Most importantly, our members share the SMD vision of *"a community that supports the independence, participation and empowerment of persons of all abilities."* Because we all share that vision, we are able to work together and present a more unified front on issues. The more we come together on issues of common interest, the stronger our voices become, enabling us to draw more attention to the issues that are truly important to the entire disability community.

Sincerely,

David Steen

Call **(204) 975-3018**  
to inquire about how you  
can become a member of  
SMD Alliance.

# an SMD success story

## A Solid Foundation Leads to a Bright Future



Nobody knows the importance of having a solid foundation better than an architect.

Brett McLaren has just completed his Masters of Architecture classes at the University of Manitoba. During the summer, he and three other students are working on a series of renovation-type jobs where they will be doing both the designing and building. In the fall, Brett intends to complete his thesis – a step-by-step documentation of the renovations he does to a self-purchased rental home, emphasizing the use of local materials.

What makes his list of accomplishments even more impressive is the fact that while Brett can hear certain levels of tone and sounds, he relies largely on lip reading for word comprehension. Yet this has not prevented him from excelling in a public school environment – something he attributes in part to his early involvement with SMD.

I think SMD set up a good understanding of what I needed to continue to succeed at the same level as people without the hearing problems that I have," says Brett.

When Brett was still preschool-aged, his parents went to the SMD Communication Centre for Children which specializes in helping young deaf and hard of

hearing children develop their verbal communication and sign language skills. For Brett, the verbal learning was key.

"I can hear but I can't hear the first pronunciation of a word," explains Brett. "So 'be', 'ne' – anything that's similar – I can only figure it out by the end of the word hearing-wise. But sight allows me to catch the beginning **and** the end."

"That's something I think I learned through SMD. Because people – especially teachers I was involved with SMD – they really focused on how they pronounced. They really mouthed the words. I think that's where I learned to speak clearly and naturally so that I can communicate with others."

Brett's communications skills made his transition into school easier by giving him the confidence and solid self-esteem to really feel like part of the group. "It definitely brought me up to a level where I could feel comfortable in class with other students without feeling less knowledgeable," says Brett.

"I feel that without SMD, it would have been like someone starting school without kindergarten, grade one or grade two. It would be like starting in grade three... If I didn't have it, I probably would have been a couple years behind."

Brett also feels he wasn't the only one who benefited from his time with SMD. ♦

# creating a culture of caring

## Overcoming differences in cultural diversity through the Ethno-Cultural Program



Differences in culture are usually thought of as things to be celebrated, not as things that might cause potential barriers.

Yet differences in culture can prevent people with disabilities in various ethno-cultural communities from connecting with services that will help them participate in their communities more fully. There can be a mutual lack of understanding between people and service providers that leads to frustration, confusion and mistrust that serves only to strengthen barriers rather than remove them.

It is not simply a question of speaking a different language. For example, some ethno-cultural groups may not believe in using assistive devices. Another group may see a disability in a negative light and choose not to come forward for additional help.

There are also traditions and lifestyles to consider. There may be a specific way to connect with an ethno-cultural community that is considered respectful and proper, such as contacting an elder to act as an intermediary.

The **Ethno-Cultural Program at SMD** was created to connect people with disabilities from various ethno-cultural backgrounds to the services and service providers that can help them in their daily lives – all while maintaining an awareness and respect for differences in culture.

Services can range from assistance in gaining employment to obtaining such basic necessities as food, clothing and shelter. They

may be as simple as providing translation of information or as complex as providing a liaison between an entire community and various service providers.

Through the Program, information on health care, assistive technology, educational opportunities and employment training is provided in 14 different languages including Filipino, Punjabi and Portuguese. Cultural Facilitators – who come from a variety of ethno-cultural backgrounds themselves – visit communities and present information to people.

In addition to these presentations, Facilitators work closely with individuals and families, developing strong relationships and establishing trust. This ongoing involvement is particularly important in close-knit communities where the approval of elders dictates the actions taken by others.

Likewise, Cultural Facilitators of the Ethno-Cultural Program work with hospitals, health organizations, education providers and potential employers to raise an awareness of various cultural differences.

By promoting understanding, the Facilitators enable service providers to act with greater sensitivity, taking traditions and beliefs into account when working with people from different ethno-cultural backgrounds.

Culture should never be a *barrier*. It should be a *consideration* in ensuring that people with disabilities – from any country and any culture – are treated with the kindness, understanding and respect all people deserve. ❖