

LearnABILITY



Newsletter July 2013 issue 2



Recommendations for the TTC to Improve Service for People with Challenges

1. Be more patient – give people more time to exit and enter vehicles.
2. Allow people to sit down before driving off – especially for people with canes, walkers, the elderly, those with buggies, pregnant women or people with visible challenges.
3. Stop over-crowding and packing too many people onto the vehicles because we can't get to the exits and it can be overwhelming and hard to breathe.
4. Don't be rude – answer questions when people ask you something.
5. Lower buses ALL THE WAY when someone with challenges is trying to enter or exit the vehicle and keep it lowered until we are off the bus.
6. Bus drivers and passengers should keep their voices quiet enough so we can hear the stop announcements.
7. You should give your seat to people with canes, walkers, the elderly, those with buggies, pregnant women and people with visible challenges ESPECIALLY THOSE AT THE FRONT OF THE BUS!
8. Lower the price of tickets or have a special price for those on OW/ODSP
9. Fix problems with WheelTrans!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
10. Be respectful of people's differences – not everyone's disability is visible.

By Jack "the infamous paper collector" Regimbal



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Art Corner



Raven is a strong and courageous woman who, after having 3 major and 3 minor strokes, turned to art as a way to heal. While Raven initially described her art as a way to keep her mind active, she explains that, over time, it has evolved into something far more powerful – a way to cope with the many physical, emotional, and cognitive challenges she now faces. Instead of focusing on everything she’s lost, Raven feels her art has helped her focus on the positives. She now believes that her strokes were “a gift” and that these gifts have allowed her to become more sensitive to the emotions and energies of those around her. Raven’s art is inspired by her personal journey of recovery, her Métis/Native culture and her background in spiritual healing. Here is a small sample of her work.



Celebrations and Recognitions



I would like to give a huge thanks to my chiropractor and personal trainer.

- *Everardo Queil*

I would like to thank my parents for helping me when I need a hand or a shoulder to cry on, and for putting up with me through all my mood swings.

- *John Seberry*

I would like to say a great big heartfelt thank you to all those who give up their Saturday to help us have a more enjoyable life.

- *Larry Eyres*

My father and I will have our Christian Name Day on March 19th, 2013, two days after St Patrick's Day. In Slovenia it was celebrated more than someone's birthday.

- *Joe Kure*



Thanks to Birgit Switilek for all the help with starting programs and also helping get a job!

Thank you to my mom Nyarko for bringing me into this World.

Thank you for the Saturday group and the staff there.

- *Adams Ankamah*

Thanks to my brother for helping me all these years. He hasn't just helped me but a lot of others. I hope I can be there for you if you ever need it...and the puck stops here.

- *Jacques Regimbal*

I want to say thank you to Birgit Switilek, my mom, Learning Network Coaches, and all my friends for helping to build me up.

- *Jessica Nwosu*

I am very happy and thankful to attend the Learning Network Saturday program and the Downtown BIST Group, because they don't take offense when I say things, and they know where I am coming from.

- *Elisabeth Coulson*

Using Learning Network Member Feedback

If you remember it, the Learning Network asked you for your feedback at the beginning of the year. From your feedback we have generated themes, building in your ideas while also balancing challenges we may have given our resources.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the Learning Network Members who participated in the Program evaluation. It has been a great experience to hear your thoughts and ideas on how the Learning Network can evolve, including the types of workshops that you are interested in attending.

I am happy to share some of the themes with you now.

- Many of you have shared that you have enjoyed or would like to have the group exercise and or walking groups. We have experienced a change in our Kinesiologist and we hope to have someone in that role soon.
- You have also shared that the fun group helps you in socializing and building your social and communication skills and our plan is to continue to run the program on Saturday mornings.
- We have introduced a Memory workshop on Saturdays to promote the exploration of further strategies to remember events and actions that are important to you.
- We are extending our services by increasing additional days in our Program and since April we have been running Programs from Tuesdays through Saturdays.
- We will also be starting a workshop on strategies to improve sleep habits and patterns and will continue with our Tuesday program focusing on communication.

On Fridays our programming is more community based and is targeted within Cloverdale Mall. Depending on the needs of Network Members, the Friday program will be flexible with location and activities.

I would like to once again thank all the Members for your valuable feedback. Given our new program additions, we plan to again request your feedback in July 2013. Thank you.

Kalsang Phuntsok
Learning Network Administrator

Virginity Taken Away by Foster Care

By Everardo Quiel

Thirty five years ago, she was a child living with her foster parent. Her attacker, Howard Smith, is a 61 year old, retired general for TTC surface routes Superintendent. Although she was under his care he impregnated the vulnerable 15 year old. He sexually assaulted the young girl and had illicit sexual intercourse between April 26 and July 13, 1978. Now Smith, his two lawyers and a courtroom packed with supporters were there to convince Justice Jane Kelly that he's sincerely remorseful and shouldn't serve any jail time for his mistake all those years ago.

"I would like the court to hear how deeply I regret the mistake I made," Smith said. But to his innocent victim it was so much more than a mere mistake, it was a violent act, that left her pregnant, it was a violation of trust that robbed her of her virginity, cast her as a liar and scarred her, leaving her with a lifetime filled with anguish and nightmares.

"People keep referring to the crime against me that happened 35 years ago as if it's something to be put into the past and forgotten like the old saying " water under the bridge". She wrote in her victim impact statement.

People don't understand, for her it feels like it was just yesterday when, the married father forced her into unprotected sexual intercourse while she lived in his Scarborough home.

She had reported him to her Catholic Children's Society, but was told it was either Smith's home or the streets. So she remained trapped there until he got her pregnant. Still refusing to believe her story, she then had to fight CCAS (Catholic Children's Aid Society) to keep her baby and would go on to develop severe depression, post- traumatic stress disorder, eating disorder, and chronic pain. At 49, the frighteningly thin and fragile woman takes 24 to 36 pills a day.

Overweight Kids at Risk as an Adult



In a study of more than 276,000 children, it was found that those who were overweight when they were kids (ages of seven to thirteen years old) were much more likely to develop heart disease between the age of 25 and 71. It is possible that these children can lose weight and live a healthy lifestyle as

adults. Childhood obesity increases the risk for certain medical and psychological conditions including, unhealthy weight gain, unhealthy diet and lack of exercise. When they don't exercise they can have a stroke, heart attack, diabetes, or even death.

Blood pressure is the force of pushing blood through the body. The blood pressure is the heart pumping blood. If the pressure rises and stays high over time, it can damage your whole body in many ways. As a parent you must do exercise with your children and do activities that they will enjoy. If they do that, they will get fit and healthy. Just go for a walk or swim or do different kinds of activities that your family enjoys.

By: Jessica Nwosu



News from Ghana

By Adams Ankamah



Good evening and welcome to this edition of the Ghanaian News. I am Adams Ankamah and here are the top stories. The president of Ghana John Atta Mills passed on. The NPP (*New Patriotic Party*) promises free Senior High education when elected to government. The chairman of the electoral commission of Ghana has assured Ghanians a peaceful election.

The president Prof. John Atta Mills has passed away. A statement was released by the vice-president Mr. John Mahama, He explained that the president died at 1:15 at the 37 military hospital because he had blood in his lungs. The president was rushed to the hospital at about 11:15 am when the complications started. As a result the state department has issued a statement that the burial and funeral arrangements will be announced by the countries funeral committee. The vice president also added that in times like these, "We as a nation must stand together as one nation in love, and console one another." He also used the opportunity to encourage the country on a healthy lifestyle for a better Ghana.

As elections are getting closer, political campaigns are still going on, however, most political leaders have suspended their campaigns for this week. Once the voting begins there are going to be security cameras at the polling stations, this will add more security to the place, hence ensuring a fair election. He finally added that voting is a right of citizens and will encourage each and everyone of a voting age to participate in this year's voting exercise.

Quick update: Mr. John Mahama was elected as new president, in Dec 2012

In other news the Market Women Association has released a statement through its head office. In the statement they sent a petition to the government trade and industry, pleading for cost of goods to be reduced since it makes it hard for them to perform to their full potential. Some of the members expressed concerns that taxes and fees charged on shipping and duties of the port makes it difficult for them to buy more to stock their shelves. This causes them to raise the price of goods at the market which certainly doesn't help the people of the country.



Debate on Casino

I know a lot of people that live in Toronto are against a possible construction of a casino in downtown Toronto or in the GTA for that matter. This is because there are a lot of homeless and even more poor people. As of right now, the city has a deficit of a few million. How do you expect to put those people in homes when the money the city is generating is not nearly enough to accommodate the millions of people that live in Toronto. I will write down the pros and cons for building a casino.

PROS of building a casino

1. Will generate millions into the local economy
2. Will increase tourism substantially
3. Will produce thousands of permanent jobs



CONS of building a casino

1. Crime will increase
2. Drug use and trafficking will increase
3. Prostitution will increase

Article written by: Everardo Quiel

Recipe for a Great Marriage

Larry Eyres

A pinch of understanding

An equal cup of love for each other

A little "love is a two way street"

Some "forgive and forget"

Give each other space.

Remember: If you both get in a panic or whatever, separate and take a few deep breaths.





“Becoming a Stranger to Yourself” The insidiousness of Brain Injury

By: Elisabeth Coulson

the shirt said “Making the invisible visible” the reverse read “You Cannot see a Brain Injury”

The T-shirt was worn by Forrest Willet, speaker and author of “Baseballs Don’t bounce: Random Thoughts from an Injured Brain” and survivor of a car crash.

In his book “My Invisible Disability” Greg Noack describes the weeks that followed his assault and recovery from a vicious beating with a baseball bat as he walked home from work.

Both men describe the tremendous amount of effort needed after a brain injury, to go to school, to work, to socialize with other people who do not understand how a person can look the same as they did before the accident yet behave so differently. People see “the same old Forrest” or “the same old Greg” or the same

are “just fine”. They then go on to assume that post accident they are choosing to be lazy or obstinate or just difficult, and many friends become former friends.

Various ideologies affect how people with such disabilities are treated, including the medical model and the social model. The medical model analyses symptom and looks for a cure; the social model – designed by disabled people – is a tool to combat discrimination.

As Wikipedia puts it “People with invisible disabilities face discrimination in situations where their particular accommodations might be seen as conflicting with the social values.” Invisible disabilities are more common than you might think, so abled bodied people shouldn’t be too quick to judge.

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The views expressed in this newsletter are that of the authors. The publication of the pieces on this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the opinions of abi Possibilities Inc.

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