



***Persons with
Developmental
Disabilities***

Northwest Alberta Community Board

News release

EMBARGOED UNTIL FRIDAY, MAY 13, 2005 - 6:00 pm

PEOPLE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES AND THEIR EMPLOYERS HONORED FOR COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS

Seventeen people with developmental disabilities, as well as businesses and community service groups from across Northwest Alberta, were honoured May 13 for their efforts promoting the inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in their northern Alberta Communities.

The Persons with Developmental Disabilities Northwest Alberta Community Board hosted its seventh annual Spring Celebration and Awards Night at the Grande Prairie Inn, to celebrate the achievements of people with developmental disabilities and those who support them in becoming active and independent members of their communities. Awards were presented in the categories of Person of the Year, Employer of the Year and the Community Contribution Award.

All those receiving awards were nominated by the public after a call for nominations went out late this winter. 10 recipients received an award recognizing them as Person of the Year. This award is for individuals with developmental disabilities who have overcome personal challenges to accomplish their goals and who are recognized as role models among their peers and in their community.

Five awards were given to businesses across the region that have provided employment opportunities for people with developmental disabilities. Additionally, two Community Contribution awards were given out, one to a Peace River business and the other to a community service group in La Crete.

“Our award ceremony gets bigger and better every year,” states PDD Northwest Alberta Community Board Chair, Paul Renfree, “It proves that there are countless individuals and groups in the Northwest that work to assist us in achieving our vision of *people with developmental disabilities as leaders and partners in a world without barriers*. We look forward to working with people and services in the region to increase the capacity of each community to support people with developmental disabilities.”

Note: Backgrounder with information about the award recipients and where they are from follows this page.

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Person of the Year

Clara Bigstone (Slave Lake): This year Clara has taken the step to moving into her own home and become more independent. She has several jobs in her community, including positions with the local newspaper, a local hair salon and house cleaning. She is also very active in her local self-advocacy group. Clara is a quiet, gentle person with a great deal of determination. She has shown that people should never be afraid to try something new in their lives.

Joel Boisvert (Slave Lake): Joel is a great role model for young men in his community. In addition to working at both the local newspaper and the kitchen at Northern Lakes College, Joel is also actively involved in his self-advocacy group as well as makes time to volunteer for many special events. Joel is caring and thoughtful and always eager to help out someone in need.

Dennis Burno (Falher): Dennis is a very proud and honest man with a great community spirit. He has been employed with the Falher Co-op for 22 years and has been recognized by his employer for his long service.

Sarah Camsell (Grande Prairie): Over the past few years Sarah has made great strides in becoming a more independent person. In addition to working at Denny's for the past 2 years, she also participates in her local self-advocacy group. Her involvement in her community has given Sarah the confidence to become an advocate for herself and others. Recently, she participated as a speaker at the 2004 Self Advocate Summit in Edmonton.

Wilfred Carby (Grande Prairie): Wilfred has become very active in his community since moving to Grande Prairie 2 and a half years ago. This move allowed him to achieve his goal of having employment and he now delivers newspapers for the local newspaper. Wilfred has shown great courage, determination and a willingness to make life good for himself and others in his community.

Ben Derksen (La Crete): Ben is a hardworking man who always does his best at everything he tries. In addition to volunteering with the La Crete Fire Department as a probationary firefighter, Ben also holds down 2 jobs – one at Neufeld Feeds and the other as shop assistant at Knelsen's Sand and Gravel. Ben has a positive impact on everyone he meets.

John Goede (High Prairie): John is a dedicated person who has been active in the self-advocate movement in the Northwest since it began five years ago. He is one of the original members and still sits on the Northwest Advocates in Action committee. John enjoys helping people learn to speak up for themselves.

Amanda Grimm-Novosel (Peace River): Amanda has shown a great deal of growth and independence over the past few years which has resulted in her living independently and learning to share her space with a roommate rather than living with her family. She has also been employed at Dunvegan Gardens for the past 4 years and her responsibilities have grown with each year of employment because of her enthusiasm, work ethic and willingness to try new things.

Arlene Milner (Peace River): This year, Arlene has taken on the role of Chairperson of her local self-advocacy group. She has a great personality and a positive attitude and she is well respected in her community. She has become a very responsible person and is always caring of others. This makes her successes even greater as she shares her strengths with others.

Wendy Thoresen (High Level): Wendy has had many personal successes over the past year – she has made great strides in her speech, in her independence at work and at home and is becoming increasingly more outgoing. Wendy loves to sing and her parents love to hear her voice. Everyday, Wendy is growing and discovering her potential. She is out there showing her community what she has to offer.

Employer of the Year

Dunvegan Gardens (Peace River): Dunvegan Gardens has employed a person with a disability for over four years for seasonal work. Each year the manager, Donna Howick has given that person increasing hours and responsibilities as they are able to handle them, as well as provides caring accepting supervision and training of that person with minimal assistance from paid support staff.

Knelsen's Sand & Gravel (La Crete): In addition to employing several people with disabilities in a variety of tasks, Knelsen's Sand & Gravel provides additional support to their local self-advocates, giving them an opportunity to fundraise with a pop machine in their office. They also include individuals in activities after hours, such as attending hockey games and other social activities.

Dunvegan Motor Inn (Fairview): Betty James, owner of the Dunvegan Motor Inn has employed several people with disabilities over the years. As a family owned business, Betty, her son Bryan and daughter Valerie are known as helpful and generous people who include their all of their staff when asking for new ideas and planning for improvement. They also make sure that their staff are supported in their skill development and encourage them to learn new things.

Denny's Restaurant (Grande Prairie): Denny's has employed people with developmental disabilities since they opened for business. They always ensure that all employees are included as part of the team, and make sure they are all supported and given the opportunity to do their best. Denny's is an equal opportunity employer and their employees are positive role models for one another.

Kenatan Catering (Slave Lake): For a number of years, Kenatan Catering has employed a person with a developmental disability in the cafeteria at Northern Lakes College. This began as a work experience placement and eventually became a paid employment position for this person. Their staff ensure that everyone is included as part of a team and work together solving problems and helping each other learn new skills.

Community Contribution Award

La Crete Agricultural Society: The La Crete Agricultural Society sets an example of community inclusion as well as they continually raise awareness of the value and contributions of people with developmental disabilities in their community. They have partnered with an agency in La Crete to build a building to house day program activities and. This new building also serves as a hall for group functions and meetings sponsored by the Society and others in the community. In addition to this, the Ag Society also provides employment opportunities for many individuals with disabilities in their community.

Garfield's Hair Care (Peace River): For years, Garfield's Hair Care, and the owner Ernie Quenneville has quietly supported individuals with disabilities in many ways. In addition to providing styling services at a reduced rate for individuals in need, Ernie and his stylists also do home visits for those unable to get out very easily. Mr. Quenneville also provides computer technical support for many people, including refurbishing old machines and giving them away to individuals, including setting them up and answering many questions. While some may view the contributions of Mr. Quenneville as small things, it is the ongoing small supports such as the ones he offers that result in truly inclusive communities.