



Up, up and away ... BCMOS set to soar this summer *Pilot project takes to the skies*

A new leisure opportunity is being launched by BC Mobility Opportunities Society (BCMOS) this year: gliding.

The summer project will allow members to take to the skies with an experienced pilot for flights of between 45 minutes and one-hours' duration. It will use the clubhouse and equipment of B.C.'s biggest gliding club, Vancouver Soaring Association (VSA), which is based at Hope.

The seven gliders at Hope Airfield are hauled into the air by a Cessna L-19, then the towrope is jettisoned, and they remain aloft for as long as the thermals will carry them.

BCMOS gliding program coordinator James Willetts wants to open up the sport to people with significant physical disabilities.

As a quadriplegic who went through nine months of rehab at G.F. Strong, he knows first hand about the depression that follows a spinal cord injury. He regularly returns to visit patients, hoping to instill confidence that

"there is life after becoming a quadriplegic or paraplegic."

Willetts flew a glider for the first time last year and enjoyed it so much he drove nine others to the grass airstrip, 150 km east of Vancouver, so they could fly. Meanwhile, he was planning to enable many more to experience flight – so he secured BCMOS backing to turn the dream into reality. Forty people with disabilities will enjoy flights in 2007.

"It's so peaceful when you are up there," he explained. "There's no noise, and you are soaring like an eagle. It's the most amazing sensation.

"I got to take the controls. It was difficult, because there's so much to concentrate on. They made me do a figure eight, which was tough without any points of reference."

Introductory flights generally don't go longer than 30 minutes, but the VSA will double that for this project, "to give people with disabilities a really good experience,"



Photo: Submitted

High-flier: Jack Levesque of Vancouver gave gliding two thumbs up after his first session last summer.

said its president, Fiona Bailey.

"We committed to 40 flights this year," she said. "But we have a vision for future growth."

The general public wanting an introductory flight in a VSA glider would pay \$140 for 30 minutes, according to Bailey – flying through this project will cost \$30, which will include

transportation out to Hope Airfield. Flights will be scheduled alternate weeks between May and September.

Volunteers will assist with transfers, but anyone wishing to fly must bring sunglasses, a hat and a packed lunch. More information and bookings: James Willetts 604-837-5616.

Recording project to reach music biz 'movers and shakers' and retail outlets CD release will highlight the musical talents of VAMS members



Photo: Mits Naga

CD talent: Writer/performer, Jeff Standfield, will provide tracks for VAMS' upcoming CD project.

A project to produce, release and distribute the work of musicians with disabilities will be coming to shape over the first half of the year.

Vancouver Adapted Music Society (VAMS) is putting together a compilation CD to highlight the musical abilities of people with significant disabilities, and break down a few barriers in the process. It will feature at least 12 tracks and should be ready for summer release – and will receive proper distribution so it appears in stores.

"We want to create an awareness of the level of musical talent of people with disabilities," explained VAMS program manager Kirk Duncan. "This will bring their work to the movers and shakers in the music scene."

He is looking to VAMS members and supporters – and friends of both – to come forward with work, stating that the non-profit will "do whatever necessary" to ensure a high-end product. This will include paying for recording, if required, and ensuring professional artwork and distribution.

One of the VAMS members considering putting work forward for this release is Vancouver singer-songwriter Jeff Standfield, who hopes to lay down one or two songs in the studio for this release.

"It might be a step towards doing a full-length CD," he said.

If you have a significant disability and want to be part of this project – you don't have to be a member of VAMS – contact Kirk Duncan at: kduncan@connectra.org.

Disability News in Brief

Employment, health workshop

A free ConnecTra workshop will review resources available for people with significant disabilities. It will address: creating a resume, the services offered by the Disability Resource Centre, and living a healthy life with chronic conditions. The event is held from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 8 at the Alma VanDusen and Peter Kaye Meetings Rooms at the Library Square Conference Centre, Vancouver Public Library (350 West Georgia St., Vancouver). A full lunch will be served. To attend, call Steven Street, ConnecTra Program Administrator at 604-688-6464 ext. 115.

Skydive to premiere

A dramatic and technically challenging play – made possible by Tetra engineers – will premiere at Vancouver's Roundhouse Community Arts and Recreation Centre. Quadriplegic actor James Sanders stars in *Skydive*, which runs at the city's Push International Performing Arts Festival. Tetra engineers, working with a physiotherapist and orthotists, produced a fiberglass shell to hold Saunders so he appears to fly. There is a preview night on Thursday Jan. 25, with the play running until February 4. Info: www.pushfestival.ca.

Boardgame tournament fundraiser

The B.C. Paraplegic Association and Boys & Girls Club Services of Greater Victoria are hosting their annual Monopoly Madness event at the Victoria Conference Centre on Saturday, Feb. 24. The tournament begins 5:30 p.m. with a silent auction, and runs to 10 p.m., with individual games lasting 90 minutes. Info: www.monopoly-madness.ca.

Trivia night call

A free St. Patrick's Day Trivia Night to "promote interactions and fun for people with spinal cord injury and other mobility-type issues and their friends and families" will be held from 6:30 p.m. to 11 p.m. at a yet-to-be announced Vancouver location, on March 17. Teams will need to be of six. Info: Vivian Garcia at the British Columbia Paraplegic Association - 604-326-1237 or vgarcia@bcpara.org.

Tea and networking event

The British Columbia Paraplegic Association is hosting a free networking event for women with spinal cord injury and other mobility-type issues. The "Spring into Life" 5th Annual Women's Tea is held Sat. April 14, from 1:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. in Burnaby, BC. For venue details and to reserve a place, contact Peer Program Associate Vivian Garcia at the British Columbia Paraplegic Association - 604-326-1237 or vgarcia@bcpara.org.

Summer job openings

Summer recruiting is already underway at the Disability Foundation. The foundation is looking to hire students for seasonal positions for its hiking and sailing programs (B.C. Mobility Opportunities Society, overseeing the TrailRider program; Disabled Sailing Association of B.C., sailing instructors). Info: Joanne Houser at jhouser@disabilityfoundation.org.

Gardening group presents varied range of activities for 2007 DIGA members looking to new season of workshops

A group that encourages gardening among people with disabilities is looking ahead to another year's growth.

The Disabled Independent Gardeners Association (DIGA) has workshops each of the next two months.

Its first 2007 event is *Orchids for You*, held 1 p.m. - 3 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 3 at G. F. Strong Rehab Centre gym (4255 Laurel Street, Vancouver). William Bischoff, former chairman of the Vancouver Orchid Society, will talk about choosing orchids for your home and garden, and how to take care of them.

This is followed by *Gardening 101: Choosing Plants for Early Spring & Gardening Tools Review*, held 1:45 p.m. - 4 p.m. on Saturday, March 3 at GardenWorks Mandeville's Seminar Room (4746 SE Marine Drive, Burnaby). Conway Lum, Garden Communicator 2006 award-winner, will give tips on plant choice. Also, volunteer-engineers from the Tetra Society will talk about adapted gardening tools.

"We try to mix as many different activi-



Photo: Betty Cheung

Green fingers: DIGA member Barbara Yost (left).

ties as we can," explained program coordinator Betty Cheung. "People like plants and natural things. They like to see they can do something to bring some nature into their homes and gardens."

Each event costs \$5, and there is free parking at both venues. Places must be booked in advance. Contact Betty Cheung at 604-688-6464 ext. 106 or bcheung@disabilityfoundation.org.

Pioneering \$45-million spinal cord injury facility to open in Vancouver by mid-2008 – will benefit patients, researchers

A \$45-million research facility will open next summer to make Vancouver a world leader in spinal cord injury (SCI) research.

An international SCI research centre and spinal clinic will be housed in a six-story, 10,000 sq m (110,000 sq ft) building, currently under construction at Vancouver General Hospital.

This centre will house researchers with the International Collaboration on Repair Discoveries (ICORD) along with the VGH Spine Centre and the Rick Hansen Foundation. There will be a clinical floor and gathering spaces for researchers and members of the SCI community.

According to information presented in the ICORD 2005-06 Annual Report, the building should be "be one of the most accessible facilities in the world, and will itself be a living laboratory for the design and assessment of accessible environments."

Officially announcing the start of construction back in November, Premier Gordon Campbell said the facility would be

of international importance.

"This is the only facility in Canada, and one of only two in the world, that brings researchers from so many disciplines together with surgeons, physiotherapists and patients to discover and develop new

therapies for spinal cord injuries," said Campbell.

The only similar multi-disciplinary centre is in Miami, Florida.

ICORD is itself an interdisciplinary research group examining strategies to promote functional recovery after SCI. It brings together researchers from the sciences and humanities – to pool medical, surgical, rehabilitation, engineering, education and community-based research.

Created in January 2002, ICORD has accumulated close to \$50 million in awards, endowments and commitments. In BC alone, it can call on more than 300 researchers – 54 principal investigators plus 250 trainees, technicians and staff.

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Photos: Mits Naga

Innovation: The Tetra Quality of Life award winner – a project that allows a ventilator-dependent quadriplegic to sail. Seen here with the ventilator box are volunteer, David Graham (left) and sailor, Dan LeBlanc.

Tetra volunteer talents on display

Gizmo Awards night honours handed out

Volunteers that enable individuals with significant disabilities to overcome everyday barriers were honoured at an awards ceremony in Vancouver.

The Tetra Society of North America is an independent non-profit that provides customized assistive devices to people with disabilities. It now has 37 Canadian chapters and two more in the United States – all based on volunteerism within the local community.

The Vancouver, B.C., chapter hosted the 2006 Gizmo Awards on Wednesday, Nov. 1 to highlight the work of its members. Held at the Rocky Mountaineer Station in Vancouver, it brought together volunteers, clients, supporters and examples of the devices that make so much difference to people's lives.

The awards recognized five of the most inventive Tetra solutions, chosen by a selection committee of volunteers from more than 300 projects completed since the last Gizmo awards. And Vancouver volunteer Harry Hardy received a pin to recognize the more than 200 Tetra devices he has completed.

Tetra client Dan LeBlanc, 28, of Vancouver, took to the stage and detailed his project, which holds a ventilator in a Martin 16 sailboat (winning volunteer David Graham, from Burnaby, the Quality of Life award). The former carpenter became a ventilator-dependent quadriplegic in a dirt-bike accident in the Yukon two years ago.

"It was around one-and-a-half years ago,

The following Tetra projects received Gizmos:

Gizmo Award for Quality of Life

- Equipment that allows a ventilator-dependent quadriplegic to sail
- Volunteer: David Graham, Burnaby

Gizmo Award for Most Creative Solution

- Device allowing hospital patients at Peace Arch Hospital to place varying – and measured – amounts of pressure on their injured or postoperative leg
- Volunteer: David Doman, Surrey

Gizmo Award for Community Impact

- A dressing device
- Volunteer: Harry Hardy, Burnaby

Gizmo Award for Best Children's Project

- A modified child's recorder
- Volunteer: Gregg Harris, Burnaby

Sam Sullivan 2006 Gizmo Award

- Climbing harnesses that allowed quadriplegic hiker Brad Jacobsen to tackle the West Coast Trail
- Volunteer: Roy Hamaguchi, Vancouver

and I was at G.F. Strong Rehab Centre, sitting in my room feeling not too good," he recalled. "Someone came in with a leaflet about the Disabled Sailing Association of BC and gave it to me.

"It gave me a little hope for the future, but I was thinking, first how am I going to fit into the boat, because I have this great big ventilator?"

Recreational therapist Mary Clark wanted to make it happen, knowing that LeBlanc used to sail and surf before his accident – and that having sporting pursuits was

vital to his well-being. She called around the world seeking a boat for her client, before contacting Tetra – a sister organization of the DSA.

"It took time and a lot of effort from a lot of people, but eventually I was sitting on a sailboat with the biggest smile on my face," said LeBlanc. "Finally I was out of my wheelchair and in a sailboat.

"It lifted me up, just to be meeting people and on the water again. Sailing is very important to me, because it's kinda hard for me to do something outdoors. Before my accident I was always outdoors doing stuff."

LeBlanc sailed five times last summer, with an instructor, and intends to go out solo when DSA sailing resumes in 2007.

Anybody with a disability that wants to know what Tetra can do for them should contact national program coordinator Pat Tweedie:

Phone: 604-688-6464 Ext. 108

Toll Free: 1-877-688-8762

ptweedie@tetrasociety.org

Tetra marks 20 years of creating access

This year sees the 20th anniversary of the formation of the Tetra Society of North America

The society was started in 1987 by current Vancouver Mayor Sam Sullivan, after engineering solutions – provided free of charge – revolutionized his life. Tetra has grown over the years, but remains true to its original vision: a volunteer inventing an assistive device that enables someone to overcome barriers in their day-to-day life.

Each year more than 250 Tetra projects are completed, each echoing the volunteer work that gave Sullivan the idea to form this group 20 years ago.

Sullivan became quadriplegic after he broke his neck in a 1979 skiing accident, at age 19. He subsequently spent seven years on welfare, haunted by the dilemma: how could he go and get a job if he couldn't feed himself or open his apartment door?



Sam Sullivan.

Sullivan contacted the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of BC (APEG BC), asking for help. He wrote a letter, explaining his situation, to the group's newsletter.

From that, engineer Paul Cermak paid Sullivan a visit at home, volunteering his time.

"Paul said, 'Give me an idea of your problems'," recalled Sullivan. "I reached for the freezer. I was able to pull the freezer door open, but it was on a spring, and it would spring back.

"I turned around and Paul was nowhere to be seen. He had gone into my bedroom and taken a coat hanger. He unraveled it. I put the hook to the freezer door and it opened. I'd been trying to do it for months, and it was done!"

These projects revolutionized his life, Sullivan said, and it soon became apparent that others needed this kind of help. Thus Tetra was formed, incorporated in December 1987.

Cermak, who has remained a Tetra volunteer, recalled his initial contact with Sullivan.

"I had just retired," he said. "I was reading the APEG BC magazine and doing the things I did not have time to do before. There was a letter asking for volunteers. I said 'why not?'"

"I called Sam. We went for a coffee. He said he needed three or so improvements to his personal living arrangements.

"Volunteering with Tetra is very interesting. It helps people to resume the life they had before their accident, or some disease."

Looking back over what's happened since, and the number of people that have received Tetra projects, Sullivan takes credit for nothing more than bringing these compassionate, highly skilled people together with people that have a need for help.

Showcase highlights vast repertoire of VAMS musicians *Gig runs from avant-garde to 'jazzy, bluesy, funky, world music'*

A pre-Christmas concert highlighted the variety of styles covered by Vancouver Adapted Music Society (VAMS).

The showcase featured three unique musicians: contemporary classical composer André Cormier, singer-songwriter Jeff Standfield and the genre-blending Woody Sparks.

The evening began with two of Vancouver composer André Cormier's "experimental avant-garde" works, performed by a trio of professional classical musicians.

"Most of the time my music is performed to people that have come to see experimental contemporary music," he said. "And even then people often leave with a sense of shock, awe and utter confusion."

He said his aim is to create the most original sounds possible – not to shock, but as the best place for his self-expression – with his performers given so much leeway that on a different night his pieces would sound radically different.

After a brief intermission, Standfield performed three numbers – backed up by Sparks on electric guitar – that he stated would someday be released on CD.

"It went smoothly and I felt the sound was good," he said, after the show. "My influences are more folk and blues than rock and pop. But the idea of putting a band together and playing rock always sounded like a lot of work to me, whereas pulling out your guitar for people seemed more natural."

Headliner Woody Sparks (real name Rolf Kempf, of New Westminster) rounded things off with a selection of festive favourites on keyboard. Sparks has been a professional musician since 1959 – he wrote Hello, Hurray for Judy Collins, subsequently a 1973 top-10 hit for Alice Cooper – and knows how to work an audience.

"I guess I take a kind of a jazzy, bluesy,



Photo: Mits Naga

SLOWBURNER: Woody Sparks lighting up the Vancouver Roundhouse stage.

funky, world music approach," he said, describing his set. "But I don't put labels on things."

VAMS was co-founded in 1988 by current Vancouver Mayor Sam Sullivan and disability advocate Dave Symington to enable people with significant disabilities to write and produce music.

"The concert was to showcase the musical talents of our members – and to enjoy ourselves," said VAMS executive director Duane Geddes. "We simply wanted to celebrate our musicians and the work that VAMS does throughout the year."

The VAMS Festive Year End Concert was held at Presentation Theatre, Roundhouse Community Centre, Vancouver on Thursday, Dec. 14.

Jay Drew receives national praise for Tetra work

A Tetra volunteer has received national recognition for his work.

Jay Drew received a Governor General's Caring Canadian Award at a ceremony in Victoria, B.C. He began with Vancouver Tetra in 1991 and has more than 200 inventions to his name.

"Helping other people gives you a sense of fulfillment, and that's what makes you happy," said Drew. "People striving to find happiness only for themselves are doing everything wrong."

B.C. Lieutenant Governor Iona Campanolo presented the award, on behalf of Governor General Michaëlle Jean, on Wednesday, Jan. 10.

In 1999, Drew received the R.A. McLachlan Memorial Award, given by the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of B.C. He received the CBC Golden Heart Award in 2004.

To comment on this edition of Disability News, or for a free electronic subscription, contact Matthew Wild: 604-688-6464 ext. 110 or matthew@disabilityfoundation.org

Research centre to open in '08

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However, their work is hampered because they are spread across Vancouver, and one central location would enable researchers to share information more easily, explained administrative coordinator Cheryl Niamath.

"Sometimes researchers get talking to each other and find that, although it seems their research is different, they are working towards each other," she said. "They are looking at the same things through different eyes."

"A new building would also give people from different places the opportunity to come in for projects. It would be a centre for people doing a certain type of research."

The provincial government has made a \$12.9-million commitment to ICORD's research centre, and other donors have stepped up to the plate to make this project a reality. The Blusson Pavilion, as the building will be called, is named in recognition of a private contribution to the project through the Rick Hansen Foundation by Dr. Stewart and Marilyn Blusson.

**Sam Sullivan Disability Foundation
B.C. Mobility Opportunities Society
ConnecTra Society
Disabled Sailing Association
Tetra Society of North America
Vancouver Adapted Music Society
Disabled Independent Gardeners Association**



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