

The Self-Manager

CILT • Centre for Independent Living in Toronto • A publication for Direct Funding Program participants

Winter 2023/2024



John Marrone (above, left) recently accompanied his daughter, Amanda, down the aisle at her wedding; he credits his attendants, Glenda & Tyler (above, right) with their support through the wedding day.

A wedding dream come true



John Marrone, a Self-Manager in St. Catharines, recently wrote to Anne Marie Covello-Baxter, his Direct Funding Resource Facilitator, about how his attendants helped him participate fully in his daughter's wedding:

Hi Anne Marie,

It was a perfect but fast-moving day! I was thankful for all the support to get me ready and where I needed to be to meet my goal - to accompany my daughter, Amanda, down the aisle to her groom, Brian!

Glenda and Tyler (my attendants) did a great job blending into the background

while helping me get from all the places Amanda wanted me, Penny, and her brother, Joe (in bridal party) to be. I needed to get to four different locations: venue house, ceremony by a pond, cocktails under an orchard tent, and the dinner reception by crossing a bridge to the Kurtz Orchards' rustic and warm market building. I'm just glad Penny took on the move to the podium for the welcome

For more **WEDDING**, please see p. 8



Media Spotlight

Nicole Hajjar
Community Facilitator

PUSH is an unscripted CBC program about “Wheelie Peeps,” a group of wheelchair users, starring Benveet “Bean” Gill. “This show is what I needed when I was first paralyzed,” Gill told the CBC. “To see that having a disability doesn’t define you. We’re regular people, striving like everyone else to live our kickass lives to the fullest. But **PUSH** is not simply a show about lives. It’s about really seeing and hearing us as people, just as we are.” Season 1 is available to stream for free on CBC Gem and Season 2 premieres February 24, 2024. ■

www.cbc.ca/mediacentre/program/push



Keep in touch



CILT Direct Funding staff can be reached by telephone at:

416-599-2458/1-800-354-9950,
fax at 416-599-3555 or by e-mail.

JESSICA AYOUB (on leave)

Intake Manager Ext. 235
jessica.ayoub@cilt.ca

MARLENE BENEDICTO

Intake and Resource Facilitator Ext. 270
marlene.benedicto@cilt.ca

THOMAS CHAPPEL

Intake Manager Ext. 235
thomas.chappel@cilt.ca

ELAINE CHU

Regional Report Advisor Ext. 292
elaine.chu@cilt.ca

JOELLA CONNAUGHT

Consumer Experience Advisor Ext. 245
joella.connaught@cilt.ca

HADEEL DAJANI

Review and Audit Advisor Ext. 222
hadeel.dajani@cilt.ca

KATE DEACON

Policy Advisor Ext. 288
kate.deacon@cilt.ca

LEISA DEBONO

Senior Program Manager Ext. 233
leisa.debono@cilt.ca

ABDULLAH DURANAI

Financial Controller Ext. 273
abdullah.duranai@cilt.ca

MARISA FALZONE

Senior Report Coordinator and Advisor
Ext. 231
marisa.falzone@cilt.ca

NICOLE HAJJAR

Community Facilitator Ext. 244
nicole.hajjar@cilt.ca

MEGAN HARRISON

Bookkeeping Report Reviewer
Ext. 275
megan.harrison@cilt.ca

NICOLA KAY

Bookkeeping Report Reviewer Ext. 230
nicola.kay@cilt.ca

LEANNE LARMONDIN

Communications and Resources Manager
Ext. 240
leanne.larmondin@cilt.ca

BHAVYA MEHTA

Bookkeeping Report Reviewer Ext. 274
bhavya.mehta@cilt.ca

EVA MIODONSKI

Interview Coordinator Ext. 239
eva.miodonski@cilt.ca

ELIZABETH RODRIGUEZ

Bookkeeping Report Reviewer Ext. 272
elizabeth.rodriguez@cilt.ca

SARA STONEHOUSE

Agreement and Resource Administrator
Ext. 232
sara.stonehouse@cilt.ca

JOHN TAM

Database Administrator Ext. 234
john.tam@cilt.ca

MARLENE URSABIA

Intake Administrator Ext. 227
marlene.ursabia@cilt.ca

DANIELLE VINCIGUERRA

Financial Assurance Coordinator
Ext. 236
danielle.vinciguerra@cilt.ca

CILT welcomes new staff



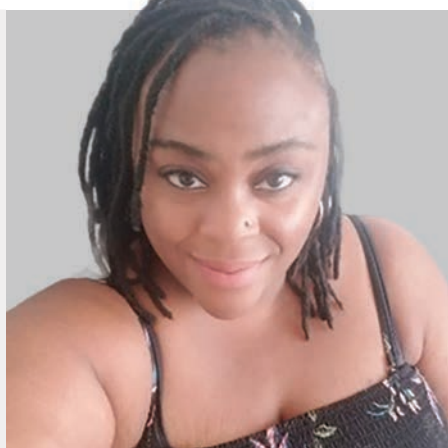
Eva Miodonski

*Interview Coordinator
Centre for Independent Living in Toronto
(CILT)*

For the past 30 years, I have been connected to the disability community in Toronto as a volunteer, attendant, art instructor, facilitator, inventor, attendant finder, coordinator, advocate, program supervisor, case manager, ally, and friend.

I am relentlessly dedicated to supporting individuals with disabilities to have access to what they want in their lives – by listening, delivering attendant services respectfully, modifying and adapting the physical environment, promoting the Independent Living (IL) philosophy, and empowering change within my workplaces. No aspect has ever felt insignificant, as I have an ongoing interest in and dedication to this rich and diverse community.

My work experience has largely been in supportive housing where I worked front-line and in management. I have worked with several organizations to run recreational programs and workshops, as well as organizing large conferences for adults with physical and communication disabilities. ■



Joella Connaught

*Consumer Experience Advisor
CILT*

Since starting to work at CILT as a Community Facilitator on the Direct Funding Program team in 2022, I have learned a lot from both Self-Managers and my colleagues. I am pleased now to have started the new role of Consumer Experience Advisor.

I come to Direct Funding with a bachelor's degree in social work and 20 years of experience in the field. I spent most of those years working in the disability sector. I am also actively involved as a parent advocate within the education system as well as an active school council member in my children's school, championing social, learning, and enrichment opportunities for the student body and their families.

I look forward to continuing to work with Self-Managers and my colleagues in my new role! ■



Thomas Chappel

*Intake Manager (Interim)
CILT*

After 20 years working within the IL community, it is a privilege now to be part of the Direct Funding Program team at CILT.

My military service was cut short due to injury, but bitterness was tempered by meeting my wife. We lived in South Korea and traveled Asia from sea cave to mountainside. We later made a documentary in El Salvador where I was introduced to a concept I had not heard of for the disabled: choice. Due to war, disease, and ineffective health care, the high number of disabled individuals were a part of the community and made their own choices based on the needs they determined. When I returned to Toronto, I took a job that fell in the same fold and worked my way from attendant to manager, always reinforced by the IL philosophy, while balancing practice and reality.

I have been honoured to meet so many fantastic individuals through the years, to be encouraged by disabled youth finding their voices, and to carry on from the great work started and enabled by organizations like CILT. ■

Jessica Oddi

A11yTO Conference

I'm Jessica Oddi (she/her), a freelance disabled designer working in accessibility. On October 20th, I attended the A11yTO Conference at the CIBC Square building. I had the honour of presenting a short talk, titled *Work in Disability Progress*, where I outlined how businesses can make their work process as accessible as their final products or services. We went through accommodations for meetings, summaries, guiding clients with tutorials, and changing the standards. It was such a great experience to network with talented accessibility designers and fellow creatives with disabilities. A11yTO set me up in a hotel so I could attend the conference. I was extremely happy to have an attendant referred to me by a friend who is also a Self-Manager. Hiring my employee gave me the ability to attend the conference by myself and make sure I was ready. She went above and beyond to make my experience easy.

Working in digital accessibility has been a real passion of mine, and now I get to share my practices with others in more places. It's because of Direct Funding that I can attend more work events like this, and I hope to continue in the future! ■



Photo by Garry Tran



Makers Making Change

Nicole Hajjar
Community Facilitator

The Neil Squire Society has several programs aimed at empowering Canadians with disabilities. They provide digital literacy training, employment support, and solutions for assistive technology. Their innovative *Makers Making Change* program is especially interesting.

Makers Making Change aims to promote economic and social inclusivity by connecting people with disabilities to volunteers who can help develop assistive technologies which are affordable and accessible. The company's online platform hosts a repository of open-source files and information; you can download the information to build it yourself, or work with one of their 'makers' to build it for you. Makers can also work with you to customize a device.

Categories include aids for daily living, adaptive gaming, assistive switches,



LipSyncs, and filters for disability type and project skills.

Library systems across the province now offer 3-D printing, which you can use to build many of the devices available in the repository. ■

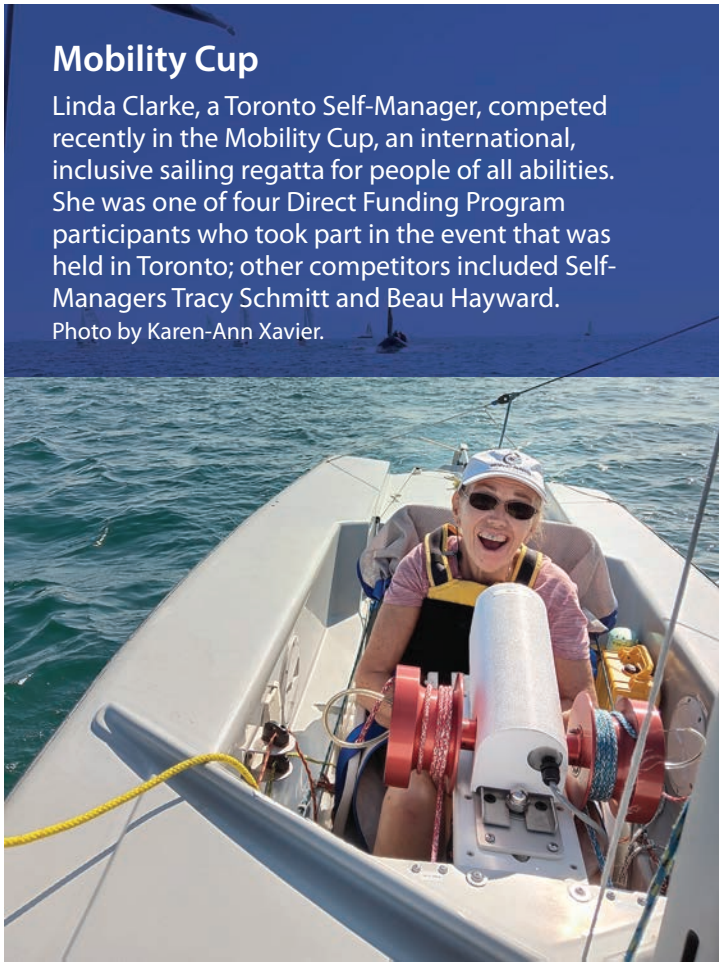
Check with your local library for 3D printing and explore the repository at www.MakersMakingChange.com

Good sports!

Mobility Cup

Linda Clarke, a Toronto Self-Manager, competed recently in the Mobility Cup, an international, inclusive sailing regatta for people of all abilities. She was one of four Direct Funding Program participants who took part in the event that was held in Toronto; other competitors included Self-Managers Tracy Schmitt and Beau Hayward.

Photo by Karen-Ann Xavier.



James and Loretta Davis, two Self-Managers in Thorold, recently received a Community Impact Award from ParaSport Ontario. "Their commitment to ensuring that there are opportunities for adapted sport for anyone who wants to play is non-stop," the organization said of the couple, who both organize, coach, play, and promote multiple sports.



Two Self-Managers brought home gold medals from the recent Canadian Boccia Championships in Richmond, BC. Lance Cryderman (centre), from Val Caron and James Davis (not pictured) were part of the Ontario team that won gold. Lance also won a gold medal in his individual event. Boccia is a Paralympic sport that was designed for people with cerebral palsy, but is now enjoyed by players with a variety of disabilities.

Photo courtesy of Boccia Canada / Sportability BC.

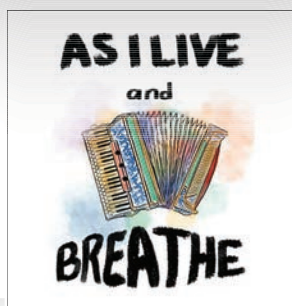
Self-Managers on screen and on paper



Feelings of Invisibility

An award-winning documentary about a longtime Self-Manager is now available to view online. *Feelings of Invisibility*, described as, “An intimate portrait of an invisible woman,” features **Anne Abbott**, a Toronto artist, painter, and Self-Manager since 2006. The documentary has been an official selection at 10 international film festivals and won awards for both the film and the director, Charmaine Kachibaia, including Best Documentary Short at the Lunenburg Doc Fest. It was recently released on Vimeo, a free video platform. ■

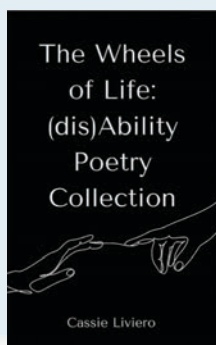
The full film, which is just over 12 minutes long, can be found at: vimeo.com/856247704



As I Live and Breathe

Self-Managers **Ayesha Zubair** and **Gabriella Carafa** recently had essays published in *As I Live and Breathe*, a collection of short stories that was written, and illustrated by youth with disabilities. The book, a project of Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital in Toronto, aims to offer representation for children and youth with disabilities. Gabriella, who lives in Richmond Hill, said of her essay, “Deciding to have a child by yourself is something that is now gaining more popularity, however, deciding to have a child by yourself with a disability is still quite uncommon. I wanted my story to give people hope that they can dream up the life they want. Although we can’t control everything in life, knowing that there are options out there for people with disabilities to become parents is so important. Having this opportunity to write this story allowed me to reflect on what my life was like before becoming a parent, what it is now, and how eternally grateful I am to have had the experiences of the past and to be living this life with my daughter and be able to share this journey with others.” ■

For more information visit: hollandbloorview.ca/our-services/programs-services/transitions-recreation-and-life-skills/youth-engagement/i-live-and



The Wheels of Life: (dis)Ability Poetry Collection by Cassandra Liviero

Cassandra Liviero, a Self-Manager who lives in Caledonia, recently published a book of poetry. In the introduction to *The Wheels of Life*, she writes, “I don’t think that I know everyone’s (dis)Ability experiences. When I refer to ‘I’ it is because ‘I’ am speaking from my heart. The use of the word ‘YOU’ does not suggest personal responsibility but references wider society. In my opinion, this poetry continues to be unfinished. No matter how many readers pick up this book, no single experience is the same.” ■

'Tis the season

Joella Connaught
Consumer Experience Advisor

With the winter season upon us, so comes that wonderful time of year to celebrate. We have a fun holiday activity and a recipe to help make the holiday season a little merrier!

A Sparkling Holiday Activity

The Holiday Nights of Lights is an immersive experience near Toronto featuring more than 1.5 million LED lights animated and synchronized to holiday tunes. Attendees will experience moving through giant ornaments, animated tunnels, and other entertaining features that are wheelchair accessible. As a bonus, attendees exiting the light show will enter the Mistletoe Market, which hosts a winter fair including food trucks. The event is being held from December 14th, 2023, to January 7th, 2024. ■

For more information on this event visit: nightsoflights.ca



Holiday baking

No-Bake Holiday Recipe: Nutty Rice Krispie Cookies

Prep Time/Total Time: 15 minutes
Yields about 2 dozen.

Ingredients:

- 1 package (10-12 ounces) white chocolate baking chips
- ¼ cup creamy peanut butter
- 1 cup miniature marshmallows
- 1 cup Rice Krispies
- 1 cup salted peanuts.

Directions:

1. In a large microwave safe bowl, melt baking chips, stir until smooth.
2. Stir in peanut butter until blended.
3. Add marshmallows, Rice Krispies, and peanuts.
4. Drop heaping tablespoonfuls onto waxed paper-lined baking sheets.
5. Cool completely. Store in an airtight container.



For more delicious holiday treats visit:
www.tasteofhome.com/collection/15-minute-recipes-holidays/





Wedding

Continued from p. 1

speech! I only needed to park and call for a drink to smile and raise a toast to her happily ever after love story! I'm happy, and it was a proud father-daughter moment with a wedding-Thanksgiving Day blessing of clear blue skies and sunshine for my baby girl!

Much thanks and appreciation for the Direct Funding Program and all its staff who help make dreams like this happen! A toast to all of you, too, for being part of our village! ■

Memo

Visit the newly-updated DF Stories page on our website to access a collection of Self-Manager stories from all past newsletters, and more!

www.dfontario.ca/resources/news/df-stories.html

My Copenhagen trip

By Susie Matthias
Self-Manager, London

The Association of Mouth and Foot Painting Artists of the World (www.vdmfk.com), consisting of disabled artists, came together to discuss the business of the association at a conference in Copenhagen, Denmark. Through the Direct Funding Program, I was able to travel and stay during the conference this year from June 30 to July 9, where I had the opportunity to do some sightseeing with my attendant, Rosa.

As a group, we went to see our art display called the International Art Exhibition, which was held on the evening of July 4th in the Royal Opera in Copenhagen. I was very proud to see one of two oil portraits paintings on display of my Uncle Graham and to view other artists' artwork as well; they are quite amazing.



I also took the opportunity to do some sightseeing in Copenhagen, such as the National Art Gallery and the well-known statue of the Little Mermaid sculpted by Edvard Eriksen that was unveiled in 1913. The Little Mermaid was made famous by Copenhagen's writer Hans Christian Andersen.

I had a wonderful time seeing and meeting wonderful places and people in Copenhagen. I hope to return one day. ■



Self-Manager Priyanka Choudhary, pictured with her son, Brij, writes, "I am very thankful to CILT & Direct Funding for providing support in caring for my baby. It has been extremely helpful." ■

All issues of *The Self-Manager* newsletter, including this one, are available to view at www.dfontario.ca/resources/news/newsletters.html



The Self-Manager Newsletter editorial team:

Marlene Benedicto, Joella Connaught, Nicole Hajjar, Leanne Larmondin, Sara Stonehouse



Direct Funding Program

Centre for Independent Living in Toronto Inc.

365 Bloor Street East, Suite 902, Toronto, ON M4W 3L4

Tel: 416.599.2458 OR 1.800.354.9950

www.dfontario.ca



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