

# The Self-Manager

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

Winter 2024/2025

30 Years of Direct Funding



## Representing Canada

Lance Cryderman, a Self-Manager from Sudbury, represented Canada at the Paralympic Games in Paris over the summer. Lance, a boccia player, first competed at the Sydney Paralympics in 2000 before taking a hiatus from

competitive sport; he returned to competing in 2017. He was one of four boccia athletes selected to represent Canada. When not competing, Lance works as an accessibility advisor at Laurentian University. ■

## Memories

"There's no way I would ever give up DF, and I am very thankful and honoured to be part of the program."



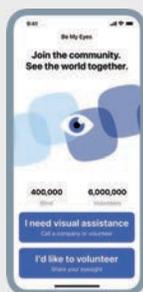
For more **MEMORIES**, please see p. 4-5

# Screen Readers and Reading Apps

**Desirée Walsh**  
*Community Facilitator*

Smart phones are not only convenient and useful but also can help make the world more accessible for those with disabilities. Apple products have several accessibility features built right in. There are also a variety of downloadable apps that can help people read and navigate the world around them. One of those apps is *Be My Eyes*. It was invented by Hans Jørgen Wiberg, a Danish furniture craftsman, who is legally blind. He got the idea for

the app when a friend who was also blind told him he would often video call friends and family to help him read things.



Free for both Apple and Android cell phones, *Be My Eyes* helps people with low vision or no vision and can also help people who may struggle with reading and literacy. The app allows you to connect with sighted volunteers via a phone call or chat. Using the

cellphone camera, the volunteer can read a document, describe an object, or can assist a person with a visual task such as guiding the person to move their camera, reading instructions, or cleaning up a spill.

Another free tool that can help an individual read is *NVDA*, an open-source screen reader that works similarly to *JAWS*, a commercially available screen reader. A screen reader is a tool that will announce digital text, such as email. *NVDA* can be downloaded here: [nvaccess.org/download/](http://nvaccess.org/download/)

## 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**  
*Intake Manager* Ext. 299  
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

**MEGAN HARRISON**  
*Review and Audit Advisor*  
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

**ZULEMA LIVIAS**  
*Intake Facilitator* Ext. 296  
zulema.livias@cilt.ca

**BHAVYA MEHTA**  
*Bookkeeping Report Reviewer* Ext. 274  
bhavya.mehta@cilt.ca

**EVA MIODONSKI**  
*Interview Coordinator* Ext. 239  
eva.miodonski@cilt.ca

**ERIN PARSONAGE**  
*Senior Community Facilitator* Ext. 295  
erin.parsonage@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

**CATHY TANG**  
*Intake Facilitator* Ext. 290  
cathy.tang@cilt.ca

**MARLENE URSABIA**  
*Intake Administrator* Ext. 227  
marlene.ursabia@cilt.ca

**DANIELLE VINCIGUERRA**  
*Financial Assurance Coordinator*  
Ext. 236  
danielle.vinciguerra@cilt.ca

**DESIRÉE WALSH**  
*Community Facilitator* Ext. 243  
desiree.walsh@cilt.ca

# Emergency Preparedness

Joella Connaught  
Consumer Experience Advisor

As we approach the winter months and continue to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic, here are some helpful tips for emergency preparedness.



- Supply of inner tubes
- Pair of heavy gloves (to protect your hands while wheeling over glass or other sharp debris)
- Latex-free gloves (for anyone providing personal care to you)
- Spare deep-cycle battery for a motorized wheelchair or scooter
- A lightweight, manual wheelchair as a backup to a motorized wheelchair (if feasible)
- Spare catheters (if applicable)
- A power outage backup plan

## Helpful Hints:

- Label all your assistive devices and equipment and attach laminated instruction cards on how to use, retrieve, and/or move each assistive device during an emergency.
- Since your medications, assistive devices, and medical conditions may change over time, it is advisable to review your needs regularly and incorporate any changes to your emergency kit supplies and your emergency plan.
- If you rely on any life sustaining equipment/apparatus, develop an emergency backup plan that will ensure it works in the event of a power outage.

## Additional Checklist Items to Consider for Wheelchairs or Scooters:

- Tire patch kit
- Can of seal-in-air product (to repair flat tires on your wheelchair or scooter)

## Free Energy Upgrades

Enbridge offers energy-efficient upgrades at no cost to qualifying households. For more information, please see: [enbridgegas.com/ontario/rebates-energy-conservation/home-winterproofing-program](https://enbridgegas.com/ontario/rebates-energy-conservation/home-winterproofing-program)

## Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP)

The Ontario Energy Board can offer emergency financial help if you are behind on your electricity or natural gas bill and face having your services disconnected. Visit their website to find out if you qualify: [oeb.ca/consumer-information-and-protection/bill-assistance-programs/low-income-energy-assistance-program](https://oeb.ca/consumer-information-and-protection/bill-assistance-programs/low-income-energy-assistance-program)

## Helpful Resources/Contacts:

### Emergency Management Ontario

*Emergency preparedness*

- Tel: 416-326-8525
- [askemo@ontario.ca](mailto:askemo@ontario.ca)

### MedicAlert Foundation Canada

*MedicAlert bracelets or identification Information*

- Tel: 416-696-0267
- Toll-free: 1-800-668-1507
- [customerservice@medicalert.ca](mailto:customerservice@medicalert.ca)
- [medicalert.ca](https://www.medicalert.ca)

## Sources:

[ontario.ca/page/emergency-preparedness-guide-people-disabilities](https://ontario.ca/page/emergency-preparedness-guide-people-disabilities)

[getprepared.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/pplwthdsblts/index-en.aspx#psn.06.01](https://getprepared.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/pplwthdsblts/index-en.aspx#psn.06.01)

# Snow Safety

Marlene Benedicto  
Intake and Resource Facilitator

Like it or not, Ontario has four seasons, and inevitably every year we have to deal with cold temperatures, snow, ice, and hail. These extreme weather conditions can have a significant impact on the lives of people with physical disabilities and their access needs. Luckily, there are different snow removal options available to fit many people's needs.

## HeatTrak

If you're looking for a long-term solution to snow and ice removal, HeatTrak might be a good option for you. These portable mats use low-voltage heating technology to melt up to 5 cm of snow and ice per hour and can be customized for commercial or residential use. You can choose from different sizes and it can be used on stairs, walkways and ramps. Find out more at [heattrak.com/en-ca](https://heattrak.com/en-ca).

## SnowAngels Canada

SnowAngels Canada is a network that matches community volunteers with those who need assistance shoveling snow. Those looking for volunteers in their neighbourhood can visit [snowangelscanada.ca](https://snowangelscanada.ca).



# 30 Years of Direct Funding

## Memories from the Original Self-Managers

**Meenu Sikand, Etobicoke**

I started with Direct Funding (DF) in early 2000. Ian Parker, who led the program, was accommodating and willing to go the extra mile to help consumers who may have difficulty understanding how to prepare and submit budgets reflecting their support needs. My first DF bookkeeper was Sylvia Jones, who guided many program participants on how to recruit attendants and keep the records of payroll, etc. All DF staff members were very hands-on in helping and guiding as the DF program and reporting system evolved. My most significant success or “yes!” moment was the ability to accept job assignments that were needed for my future career growth – my availability at short notice to resolve issues at work and having the flexibility of different start or finish times according to my employer’s needs. It was difficult to find staff because I lived in the suburbs, where public transportation was not as good as in Toronto. Finding good attendants willing to work split shifts and being able to drive in the early mornings and late evenings was always a challenge. My family was extremely supportive and happy for me as I was able to meet my changing disability needs and pursue my employment goals without feeling restricted.

**Lisa Vallee, Penetanguishene**

I became a Self-Manager when DF was just a pilot program – I’m an OG! Before DF, I received only two hours of care every weekday morning. I spent one of the two hours giving instructions because I did not receive the same homecare worker twice. With the DF program, I constructed and implemented my own care plan, with regular attendants of my choice! Who’d ever think that something as small as using the bathroom when I needed to as opposed to being restricted to a specific time period would create such freedom and independence? I remember being so nervous that the pilot program wouldn’t become permanent after it had already improved my quality of life in such a short time. I didn’t want to go back to the way it had been, and my family and I are so thankful that it did become a full-fledged, successful program.



**Paul Green, Scarborough**

Thinking back 30 years after my injury in 1992, which left me a quadriplegic and using a wheelchair for mobility, I was surprised at the low quality of care that was offered to me. Luckily, a friend introduced me to the DF pilot project and my life has been completely different ever since. Because of DF I was able to choose and hire suitable caregivers who are not abusive and were concerned about the quality of care they provided. My attendants have been indispensable. They accompany me to medical appointments, procedures, and surgeries and are available in case of emergency at any time of the day or night, which gives me a sense of security. They are conscientious about punctuality and cleanliness and cook meals the way I like them. There’s a lot of flexibility, and it’s great to schedule your staff to meet your acts of daily living. There’s no way I would ever give up DF, and I am very thankful and honoured to be part of the program.



### Tammie Ricci, Nepean

I have been a Self-Manager since 1994. At the time, I was enrolled in a PhD program in Toronto and was receiving attendant care services via a 24-hour care program. The program was not client centred, nor did it meet my needs. I was hoping that by becoming a participant in the DF program, I would have more control over who was providing my care, when my supports would be provided, and where

they were provided. The 24-hour care program forced female participants to have male attendants provide very personal care. Services were only offered on site, and you were only provided with very few hours of support. This limited my ability to have an attendant assist at the grocery store, travel with me, and make healthy, well-balanced meals, among other things. DF opened so many doors and opportunities for me, well beyond what I could have imagined and hoped for. I was able to hire my own attendants. I was able to have more access to my community. I was able to make more complex meals and live a life of my own design. This was only the beginning. I completed my PhD, got married, had children, and started my own business. When I started with the DF program, many of these milestones were not even part of my dreams. I could not envision the quality of the life that the program has provided and continues to provide for me. It was unfathomable at the time to see this future for myself. DF has been, and continues to be, the vital ingredient to my freedom and quality of life.

### Audrey King, Don Mills

Prior to DF I was supported by family members, friends, and an outreach program. I was forever feeling grateful, apologetic and limited in what I might ask for. All that changed with DF. The greatest early benefit was discovering the mutual respect and accountability that happens with a "direct" employee-employer relationship. I, the consumer, was in control with no agency rules or policies limiting what my attendant was allowed to do. It was liberating to discover the freedom and increased opportunities for help in different locations, even on vacations or in restaurants. In addition to help with personal physical needs, I also had normal, integrated help with mundane everyday necessary life tasks such as shopping, banking, mail, and communication. That first year I felt fulfilled as a human "person," not just a body with a medical diagnosis under the authority of those who do not know me. Thanks to DF, some 30 years later (and, in spite of ventilator dependence and severe physical disability), I continue to be an independent, capable person living within my own community. I am extremely grateful.

### Peter Sheahan, Gloucester



I joined the DF program back in January 1995. My goal from self-managing my attendant care services was to be able to live as independently as possible, work, maintain a normal and healthy relationship with my wife, and one day raise a family. I have been fortunate to have had attendants who worked with me for many years, some more than 25 years, before they retired and have become friends. My philosophy has always been to treat my attendants the way I would like to be treated and to keep the communication open. Back when I started, the average wage of my attendants was \$11.96/hour. Over the years, DF has provided me with the means to hire attendants who enabled me to have a successful career, assisted me in providing support for care and nurturing when our two sons were younger, and all the while maintain a healthy relationship with my wife. Looking back, was it a bit of a leap of faith joining DF and self-managing my care services? Sure, but it has definitely been worth it.

### Gary Turner, Toronto

When I joined DF, I did so because I was living in a support service living unit and I wanted consistency with the staff who assisted me. I was able to attain this through DF.



**Direct Funding went from a pilot project to full program status in 1998.**

# Direct Funding Welcomes New Staff



**Zulema Livias**  
*Intake Facilitator*  
CILT

I started working with people with disabilities six years ago. From that moment, I became aware of the multiple barriers they face to enjoy their rights and freedoms. In Peru, I studied psychology and worked for four years in the design of social programs aimed at increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities. This experience made me realize work is not solely an economic income, it also increases autonomy, and it is a way of empowerment. In 2022, I moved to Canada and studied community work. Being able to study in this field was very rewarding since it allowed me to broaden my knowledge about diversity and empowerment. It also increased my commitment to continue working for the disability community. I have volunteered at community centres, film festivals, and employment agencies. I believe my role in CILT and in life is focused on the contribution to the empowerment of people with disabilities, so they make their own choices and decisions. For me the Independent Living philosophy is synonymous with freedom.



**Cathy Tang**  
*Intake Facilitator*  
CILT

For the past couple of years working in the early childhood sector, I have grown my experience and passion in working alongside the community. I also had the pleasure to volunteer at Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital, and I loved every minute I spent with the children there. I was so encouraged by the sheer will and courage that the children and youth there have. Therefore, I knew I wanted to work with the fantastic team at CILT and all the Self-Managers! I moved to Canada a while ago; starting life in a new country is not always easy, however, I understand the importance of empathy and understanding, which really supported me through any tough times. I hope to be a part of the support to any consumers that I have the privilege to work with in the future! I also really love to talk about food, culture, travelling, and learning new languages!



**Erin Parsonage**  
*Senior Community Facilitator*  
CILT

After completing a diploma in practical nursing, I began working in the community, providing nursing services to people at home. My experience couldn't have been better. Helping people remain independent and comfortable at home, instead of in long-term care or hospital, was very rewarding. When the time came to pivot, CILT was a perfect space to join. I had worked as an attendant for a Self-Manager on the DF program and am very excited to have now joined as a community facilitator. Prior to DF and nursing, I worked in the non-profit space at a food rescue charity. I am very excited to continue to work in the non-profit world. Let's change the world for the better!



## Canadian Dental Care Plan (CDCP)

More affordable dental care is available through the CDCP for eligible Canadian residents who are:

- Adults with a valid federal Disability Tax Credit Certificate for 2023
- Seniors aged 65 and over
- Children under the age of 18

Find out more and apply at [canada.ca/en/services/benefits/dental/dental-care-plan.htm](https://canada.ca/en/services/benefits/dental/dental-care-plan.htm)

# Seasonal Recipes & Craft Ideas

Joella Connaught  
Consumer Experience Advisor

With winter upon us, it's a great time for making fun crafts and tasty treats to set the season just right. To help with some inspiration, here are some fun ideas for you to explore.



## Cheerio Bird Feeders

Making cheerio bird feeders is a simple and quick craft. To get ready to create your bird feeders, prepare the following materials:

### Materials needed:

- Cheerios
- Floral wire or pipe cleaners
- Ribbon for hanging

### How to make them:

- Bend back one end of the pipe cleaner or wire to keep the Cheerios from falling off the back end.
- String the Cheerios onto the pipe cleaner or wire until you have about two inches left on one end, or about 40 Cheerios.
- Center the Cheerios on the pipe cleaner or wire and then bring the two ends together, twisting them to create a full circle of Cheerios. About an inch of bare pipe cleaner or wire from each end should be left sticking out.
- Twist the bare ends of the pipe cleaner or wire at the top to make a smaller circle that will serve as the hanger.
- Bend the circle of Cheerios into your desired shape.

### Sources:

[redtedart.com/easy-bird-feeders-cheerio-bird-feeders/](http://redtedart.com/easy-bird-feeders-cheerio-bird-feeders/)

[redeemyourground.com/how-to-make-cheerios-bird-feeder/](http://redeemyourground.com/how-to-make-cheerios-bird-feeder/)

## Dried Orange Slices and Clove Decorations:

These are a simple craft providing a decorative touch to the home. In addition, they provide a lovely fragrance.

### Ingredients

- Dried orange slices
- Cloves
- Ribbon



### How to make them:

- Cut the oranges into slices (approximately 2 cm thick).
- Place the slices onto an oven rack (not a baking tray as they will stick and burn).
- Place in a cool oven (120 degrees Celsius is ideal).
- Leave in the oven until cool.
- Use in garlands, wreaths, decorations, potpourri, etc., or attach them to a wire to be hung.

Source: [ourlittlehouseinthecountry.com/2014/10/10/how-to-make-dried-orange-slices/](http://ourlittlehouseinthecountry.com/2014/10/10/how-to-make-dried-orange-slices/)

## Easy 5-Minute Chocolate Bark

Prep Time: 5 minutes  
Total Time: 5 minutes  
Yields: 12 servings  
Serving Size: 1 serving

### Ingredients:

- One 11- to 12-ounce bag of white, dark, milk, or semi-sweet chocolate chips (about 2 cups)
- 1 tablespoon of vegetable shortening or vegetable oil
- Various toppings of your choice such as candy, pretzels, and cookie crumble



### Method:

1. Line a 10x15-inch pan or cookie sheet with wax paper.
2. Place chocolate chips in a microwave safe bowl. Add shortening or oil. Heat chocolate chips on 50% power in 30-second increments, stirring between each, until melted and smooth.
3. Spread chocolate into an even layer on the prepared pan. Top with desired toppings. Chill to set, then break into pieces. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for four days to two weeks.

Source: [crazyforcrust.com/5-minute-chocolate-bark-6-ways/](http://crazyforcrust.com/5-minute-chocolate-bark-6-ways/)



## For Your Information

### Time for T4s

Please note: as of January 1, 2024, if you issue more than five T4 slips in a year you are **required** to file these **electronically** with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). Employers who issue six or more T4s in a calendar year without filing electronically will be levied a penalty by CRA (and Self-Managers cannot use Direct Funding to pay fines or penalties). Please see the CRA website for more information.

### DF Stories

Self-Manager stories, including those from past newsletters, are available to view on the Direct Funding website. You can find them at [Resources > News > Direct Funding Stories](#) or [dfontario.ca/resources/news/df-stories.html](https://dfontario.ca/resources/news/df-stories.html).

### CRA and WSIB

A reminder to all Self-Managers that it is permitted to make CRA and WSIB payments electronically from your DF bank account, not just by mail. If you have any questions about making electronic payments, please contact your Direct Funding report reviewer for assistance.

### 2025 Attendant Payroll Schedule

The attendant payroll schedule and list of public holidays for the new year are available to view on the DF website at [dfontario.ca/df\\_public/2025\\_Attendants\\_Payroll\\_and\\_Deposit\\_Dates.pdf](https://dfontario.ca/df_public/2025_Attendants_Payroll_and_Deposit_Dates.pdf)



Self-Manager Manon Contini (right) participated in the Guelph MS Walk earlier this year. On the day of the walk, she met up with Robyn Jackson (left), and other staff from Independent Living Waterloo Region.

### The Self-Manager Newsletter Editorial Team:

**Marlene Benedicto**

Intake & Resource Facilitator

**Joella Connaught**

Consumer Experience Advisor

**Leanne Larmondin**

Communications & Resource Manager

**Sara Stonehouse**

Agreement & Resource Administrator

**Desirée Walsh**

Community Facilitator



## 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](http://www.dfontario.ca)

