

# The Self-Manager

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

Summer 2025

**30** Years of Direct Funding



## AccessFest Celebration

Self-Manager **Luke Anderson** greets Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow at the recent AccessFest celebration. Luke is executive director of StopGap, a not-for-profit that raises awareness about accessibility and provides custom-built access ramps to businesses. Visitors to AccessFest were invited to sign a ramp. The event was created by AccessNow, an organization run by another Self-Manager, Maayan Ziv.

Photo credit © Velanie George



For more  
**30th ANNIVERSARY  
CELEBRATIONS,**  
please see p. 4–5

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**Award  
winner**

**Maayan Ziv**, a Toronto Self-Manager and entrepreneur, was recently presented with the King Charles III Coronation Medal in Ottawa. "It truly was a very special and festive moment to receive my medal from a fellow disabled leader, Chantal Peticlerc," said Maayan. "I'm also very grateful to CILT for the foundational support that the Direct Funding Program has continued to provide me that is allowing and empowering me to live my life day to day and achieve these milestones!"

Photo © William Agnissan Photography



# Getting Out & About This Summer!

Joella Connaught-Kinga  
*Community and Outreach Facilitator*



Finally, the long-awaited warmth and sunshine has arrived; and with it, there are many fun things to do to make the summer season even more enjoyable! Below are some fun and interesting events being held this summer. Check them out! Perhaps one of them will pique your interest.

## **Art & Technology Inspired Fun – Toronto**

### **Arcadia Earth**

Arcadia Earth combines creative art installations and technology to create a multi-sensory experience, encouraging visitors to be more mindful of having a sustainable future. It is an immersive experience that exhibits the natural beauty of Earth and the impact of human actions on the environment. All spaces inside Arcadia are fully accessible, and Access 2 cards are accepted and provide free entry for a support person once the card is presented.

For more information, please visit:  
[www.arcadiaearth.ca](http://www.arcadiaearth.ca)

## **Canadian Museum of Nature – Ottawa**

The Canadian Museum of Nature is both an educational and scientific institution. It is a popular tourist destination in downtown Ottawa and is housed in the Victoria Memorial Building, which is a true historic castle. There are exhibitions, events and activities to appeal to a wide variety of interests. There are multiple galleries with themes like fossils, mammals, water, birds, earth, and the Canada Goose Arctic Gallery. Admission is free for one person accompanying a person with a disability and the museum is wheelchair accessible.

For more information, please visit  
[www.nature.ca](http://www.nature.ca)

## **Nature Inspired Fun**

### **Cambridge Butterfly Conservatory**

Discover thousands of free-flying butterflies at the Butterfly Conservatory's 10,000 square-foot indoor tropical garden. The conservatory also hosts a variety of tropical plants, birds, and animals, along with several water features and exhibits. The conservatory facility and front gardens are entirely accessible, and the conservatory accepts the Personal Attendant for Leisure (PAL) Card, as well as the Access 2 card, which provides free entry to support persons.

For more information, please visit:  
[www.cambridgebutterfly.com](http://www.cambridgebutterfly.com)





# 30 Years of Direct Funding

## 30th Anniversary Events

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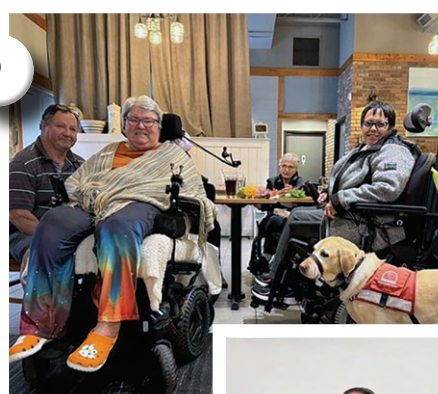
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1. Independent Living Centre Kingston celebration
2. Independent Living Centre London & Area celebration
3. Kingston
4. Independent Living Waterloo Region (ILWR) - Waterloo celebration
5. Breaking Down Barriers (Collingwood) celebration
6. Kingston

7. London
8. Kingston
9. Kingston
10. London
11. Collingwood
12. Independent Living Sudbury Manitoulin
13. ILWR - Cambridge

## Parenting with a Disability Network (PDN)

PDN is a cross-disability network for parents and prospective parents with disabilities. This is a unique program run by the Centre for Independent Living in Toronto and since there are no other resources like this in Ontario, we are happy to connect with Self-Managers across the province! The PDN runs a virtual peer support group for parents facilitated by staff with lived experience. The network's coordinator, Rebecca, is happy to connect one-on-one with parents and prospective parents to strategize and research resources and referrals that meet your needs.

The PDN also works with service providers to improve their knowledge and understanding of how to support parents with disabilities. They are currently setting up the Parenting and Disability Collaborative, which brings organizations across Ontario together to ensure connection and communication between programs working with disabled parents.

Visit the PDN website to learn more. You can also join the PDN mailing list to keep up to date about programs and events for parents, prospective parents and service providers.

Email: [rebecca.wood@cilt.ca](mailto:rebecca.wood@cilt.ca)

[www.cilt.ca/programs-and-services/parenting-with-a-disability-network/](http://www.cilt.ca/programs-and-services/parenting-with-a-disability-network/)



# Assistive Devices Hacks

There are a wide range of disability products on the market today that can make so many tasks easier. While these items are great for independence, they can be expensive, hard to find, or not the right fit for your specific needs. Here are a few hacks and devices we like:

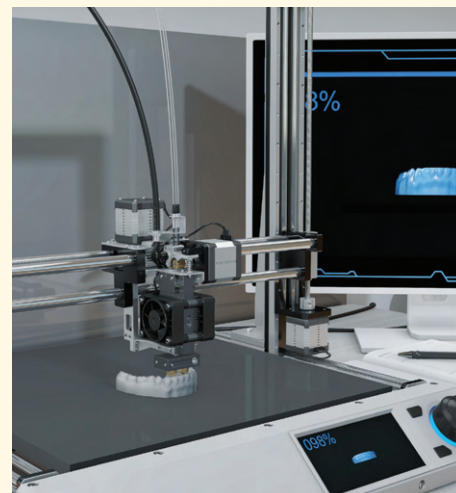


## Bottle Holders

You've probably heard of cup holders for wheelchairs, but have you ever tried a bottle bag? These come in a wide range of price points and are available through multiple retailers. Bottle bags can fit many different bottles (including tumblers with handles and straws), can be easier to access for some people than a cup holder that sits further down on a chair, and are insulated. They also come in different colours and prints!

## Outlet Remotes

Many people have "smart" homes nowadays. You might ask Siri, Alexa, or Google to help you around the house. Using smart outlet plugs, you can activate devices using your voice. These are great tools for many people, but they need reliable wi-fi to work. An alternative is an outlet remote. By plugging in an adaptor, you can turn off devices with a battery operated remote or switch. These inexpensive devices are available at hardware stores and online.



## 3D-printed devices

3D printers have led to an explosion in the variety of customizable and inexpensive devices to help with a variety of tasks. These can be tools that help you cook, play video games, or with your dexterity. Many libraries have 3D printers that you can access for free or for the cost of supplies. Check with your local library, as many also offer training. If you are interested in having something 3D printed, some organizations offer this for free or at cost. The Neil Squire Society runs a Makers Making Change program that matches volunteers with people with disabilities to devise custom solutions. Learn more about Makers Making Change here at [www.makersmakingchange.com](http://www.makersmakingchange.com)

*Do you have a product or hack you would like to share with us? Please get in touch at [dfinfo@cilt.ca](mailto:dfinfo@cilt.ca) or call your local resource centre. We look forward to hearing from you!*

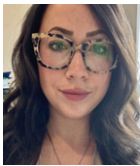


# Direct Funding welcomes new staff



**Maha Alio** (she/her)  
Project Manager  
Centre for Independent  
Living in Toronto (CILT)  
I recently joined the  
Direct Funding team

with a background in community work, equity, and people-first project management. I'm passionate about building systems that are clear, inclusive, and grounded in real-world needs. To me, Independent Living means choice, dignity, and the freedom to lead life on your own terms. I also sing in a feminist choir – because joy and collective voice matter, too.



**Tiffany Dubien**  
Regional Administrative  
Coordinator  
Disability Resource  
Centre for Independent  
Living (KapusKasing)

Born in the northern town of Kapuskasing, I bring a diverse and dynamic background to my work. I began my career in healthcare, working as a dental assistant before becoming a registered practical nurse in 2010. Over the years, I've expanded my professional experience into office and administration roles, most recently contributing to the fast-paced environment of a busy legal firm. I am now thrilled to begin an exciting new chapter as a Regional Administrative Coordinator with the Direct Funding Program at the Disability Resource Centre for Independent Living, where I look forward to supporting greater independence and empowerment within our community.



**Erin Gregoire**  
Administrative Assistant  
Disability Resource  
Centre for Independent  
Living (KapusKasing)  
I'm super excited to be

part of the Direct Funding Program team. While I'm proud of my past work as an early childhood educator for 13 years, the time came for me to change careers. Besides work, I am a family kind of girl. I love spending time with my husband and two boys as much as possible. I love hunting, camping, and fishing, and all time spent as a family. I'm looking forward to learning and sharing information with this program.



**Heba Hamzeh**  
Report Reviewer  
Independent Living  
Waterloo Region  
I recently joined ILWR as  
the Direct Funding Report

Reviewer. With a background in non-profit finance and public policy, I bring more than seven years of experience supporting marginalized communities through financial reporting, research, and advocacy. I am passionate about inclusive systems and empowering people to live independently.



**Jenn Jensen**  
Regional Resource  
Facilitator  
CILT

I am thrilled to be joining the Direct Funding team. I have a background in case management and prior to that I worked in the marketing and communications field. I love meeting new people, building strong working relationships, and buying too many plants!

**Olivia London**  
Interview Eligibility Advisor  
CILT

I am a registered nurse with more than 20 years of experience, including more than nine years in case management. I specialize in supporting individuals with chronic illnesses, helping them transition into the community with essential resources and care coordination. I am passionate about empowering individuals through education, advocacy, and compassionate support.



**Aidyn Low**  
Senior Community  
Facilitator  
CILT

I am a queer and trans wheelchair user who is passionate about finding spaces for disabled people to bring their full selves. Specializing in mental health, trauma, and 2SLGBTQs counselling and case management thus far, I am excited to bring my knowledge of complex barriers to support Self-Managers on the Direct Funding Program.



**Michael Marek Sparrow** (they/them)  
Regional Resource  
Facilitator  
CILT

Along with a lifetime of lived disability experience, I hold a master of arts degree in child study and education and an honours bachelor of arts in English. I am a teacher with the Ontario College of Teachers and a registered early childhood educator with the College of Early Childhood Educators.

For more **NEW STAFF**, please see p. 8

## New Staff

Continued from p. 7



**Evelean Nakitende**  
Community Facilitator  
Niagara Centre for  
Independent Living

I hold a master's degree in counseling psychology, a bachelor's degree in social work and social administration and a diploma in child and youth care. I have worked as a personal support worker in various settings, including for a Self-Manager. In Uganda, I was a therapist at the Ministry of Defense and Veteran Affairs. I have cross-cultural experience, am dedicated to community inclusion, and my philosophy is person-centered, culturally sensitive, and fully aligned with Independent Living. I am passionate about empowering Self-Managers and excited to work at NCIL. Starting a new life in Canada was not easy, but empathy and understanding from others and within myself helped me navigate the most challenging times. I love travelling, baking, cooking and trying out different cuisines.



**Diya Patel**  
Bookkeeping Report  
Reviewer  
CILT

I have experience in bookkeeping, payroll, and financial support roles, with a diploma in business administration – accounting. I enjoy exploring wellness habits, learning French, and capturing peaceful scenic photography. I'm excited to contribute to CILT's mission while continuing to grow personally and professionally.

### Going Paper-Free

If you would like to go paper-free and receive all your Direct Funding documents by email only, please email your request to [dfinfo@cilt.ca](mailto:dfinfo@cilt.ca).



## Testimonial

I am honoured to be a part of this program. Many years ago, I was involved in a severe motor vehicle accident resulting in injuries to my spine and neck. My mobility is minimal. I was concerned for my future until I started on the Direct Funding Program. Since then, I have hope, joy, and confidence that a future life with some independence is possible. I would like to reassure new Self-Managers that an excellent support process is in place to guide you as you become familiar with program requirements.

I am grateful to those who dedicate so much energy and time to this wonderful program. Thank you for shaping our lives to make us whole again in a new way.

**Athina Hall**  
Toronto



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**Ernie Galloway**  
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