

Living Life the Way I Want

Richard Migneault on being a Self-Manager for nearly a quarter century

By ELISABETH HARRISON

As a participant in the 1994 pilot project that would later become the Direct Funding program, Richard Migneault of Sudbury has now been a Self-Manager for nearly 25 years. He has also been a frequent consumer representative on Direct Funding Selection Panel interviews, drawing upon his extensive knowledge of the program to assess the eligibility of applicants.

“Direct Funding is a life-saving program.”
—Richard Migneault

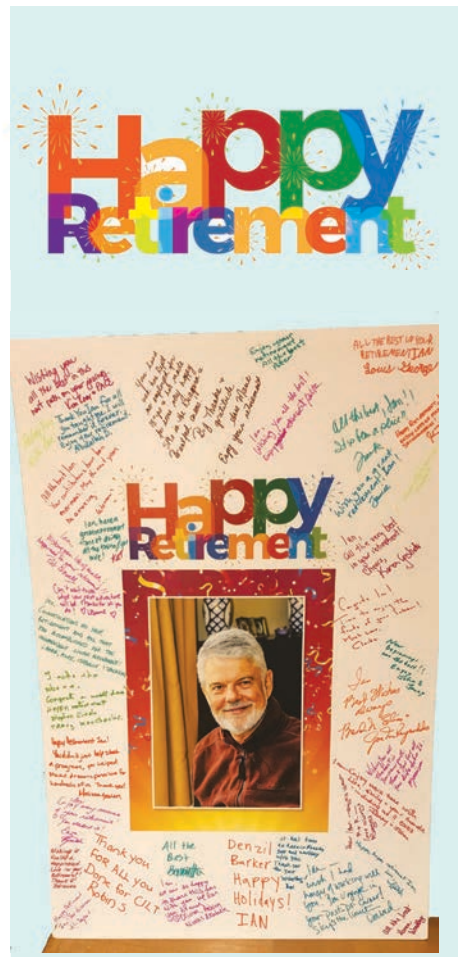
Richard calls Direct Funding a “life-saving program” that allows him the freedom and independence he needs to live life on his own terms. Prior to joining the pilot, he was receiving just one hour of Outreach attendant service each day, with rigid bookings that made it difficult to maintain a schedule compatible with his college studies, or later with working outside of the home. The limited hours he received also meant continuing to rely on his parents for most of his assistance.

In 1994, Richard learned a pilot project was about to take place. He had participated in consultations concerning

attendant services in Ontario and had been following the project’s development; he immediately decided to apply to become a Self-Manager. He was nervous before his interview, but he studied hard and he was accepted into the project, becoming one of the initial 78 participants, one of only five in Sudbury.

Becoming one of the pioneers posed similar challenges to those facing new Self-Managers today, including learning the financial aspects of the program, as well as recruiting, training and managing staff. Richard notes the first Self-Managers also had additional challenges, because the program had fewer established policies and guidelines than today. For example, because there were no bookkeepers who were already familiar with the program, Richard had to work closely with his bookkeeper to figure out the process. Richard also explains that because he had previously relied on a combination of family assistance and

Please see **RICHARD**, p.8



Friends, family and colleagues of Ian Parker gathered recently to celebrate his retirement. Parker was the original manager of Direct Funding when it started as a pilot in 1994 until 2011, when he became the program’s Senior Advisor at the Centre for Independent Living in Toronto.

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Congratulations

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Ian Parker, right, with attendant Louie George.

A new face at CILT

Self-Managers will soon see a new name popping up on their official documents. That's because Sandra Carpenter, Executive Director of the Centre for Independent Living in Toronto (CILT) since 2006, is retiring as of early 2019. Sandra has led CILT with strength and vision these past 12 years, and provided steady oversight to recent expansions of the Direct Funding Program.

CILT recently welcomed **Wendy Porch** (right) as its new Executive Director. Ms. Porch's most recent role was as Manager of Episodic Disabilities Initiatives at Realize in Toronto, and she is a lifelong disability justice advocate who brings more than 20 years of experience in the fields of accessibility, disability, human rights and education. Ms. Porch reports she is a strong supporter of the principles of independent living, and of the Direct Funding program as an example of these principles in action.



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IMPORTANT

Direct Funding Agreements updated; Definitions of 'family members' expanded



New Updates

All Self-Managers will soon be receiving important new updates from the Direct Funding program – some changes will be immediate and some will be sent over the coming months. The first update is that all Self-Managers can expect to receive updated Direct Funding Agreements over the next three years.

These legal agreements, which Self-Managers sign before starting on Direct Funding and periodically thereafter, explain the program parameters and the obligations of all program participants.

Self-Managers are asked to review the agreements and return them promptly.



Consent Forms

Secondly, and more immediately, all Self-Managers are being sent updated Release of Information Request Forms. The Release (also sometimes called the "consent") is needed rarely but there may be times when we have to contact, for example, a government ministry, attendant service provider or health care provider about your participation in the Direct Funding Program. The Consent allows other agencies or individuals to share information with the Direct Funding Program. This information is occasionally needed by the program to, for example, confirm your needs with other attendant service providers or health care providers.

Self-Managers will be required to sign and return these forms promptly.



Expanded Definition

The final change is an expanded definition of family

members whom program participants may not employ or pay with program funds; this definition, provided by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, which funds the Direct Funding Program, was broadened to cover more categories of family members who cannot be paid with program funds. The new definition of family members will be sent to all Self-Managers in the near future.

If any self-manager believes they may be employing an attendant who falls within the new definitions of family members, we encourage you to speak to your local Independent Living Resource Centre about your individual circumstances. The program must work within the available parameters, but we will try to be flexible wherever possible.

Self-Managers are reminded that knowingly employing and paying family members is a breach of the Direct Funding Agreement.

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Testimonial

As I enter into my second year on the Direct Funding Program, I reflect on how this program has changed my life.

Following a vehicle accident in 1976, I was a quadriplegic. For the first nine years I lived with my family, and my mother and sister were my main caregivers. In 1984 I moved out of our home with my sister, and it was at this time I was introduced to multiple homecare providers. We tapped into these local services until I moved to my current place of residence in 1988 with my then husband. Following my divorce, my mother moved to my residence, and again, I became heavily dependent on her and the service providers in this area. Although the providers I had were excellent, my life was very structured, and schedule driven. Time with attendants was short, and my needs were many.

I became a Self-Manager in July 2017.

I am now totally responsible for directing my own care, have attendants who work best for me, and can actually have a shower after all these years! I am no longer housebound or dependent on family and friends to take me places, and come and go as I please with the assistance of my attendants.

My life has changed beyond belief. I actually have a life, and it's my own!

Thank you Direct Funding!

Heather Dobson
Rosseau, Ont.



My life has changed
beyond belief...



Direct Funding Resource Co-ordinator

I studied Developmental Services at Fanshawe College and have since spent my career providing intervention services for people who are deafblind. I have both provided direct intervention and have been a service co-ordinator. Most recently, I spent my time leading a team supporting three people who are deafblind. I was recently hired as the Direct Funding Resource Co-ordinator at the Independent Living Centre of Waterloo Region. I have volunteered for the centre for many years and am excited about the opportunity to build my skills and be part of the Direct Funding team. In my free time, I enjoy being around my family, friends and pets; campfires in the backyard are a current favourite, with hiking being a close second.

Alyssa Schade,
Independent Living Centre of Waterloo Region

Resources to Improve Affordability and Accessibility

By Elisabeth Harrison

While the cost of living has been rising for everyone, decreases in affordability can have an even greater impact on people with disabilities. There are many grant, rebate and tax credit programs available across Ontario that may help to improve affordability and accessibility, some government-funded and others sponsored by companies or charitable organizations. The resources included on this list are current as of November 2018.



Ontario Electricity Support Program

This program for low-income households applies a monthly credit directly to your electricity bill to lower the amount you must pay. Credits range from \$35 to \$113 per month depending on your income, family size, source of home heating and usage of medical equipment.

<https://ontarioelectricitysupport.ca>

Low-Income Energy Assistance Program

This program is for low-income electricity and natural gas consumers whose bills are in arrears and are facing service disconnection. The program provides a one-time emergency grant of up to \$500 to pay your bill.

<https://www.oeb.ca/rates-and-your-bill/help-low-income-consumers/low-income-energy-assistance-program>

Home Assistance Program

The Home Assistance Program provides qualifying lower-income households with free, energy-saving upgrades like better insulation, light bulbs, power bars and even air conditioners and appliances.

<https://www.greensaver.org/consumer/homeassistance/>

AffordAbility Fund

The AffordAbility Fund is another source for free energy-saving appliances as well as home upgrades like insulation and heat pumps.

<https://www.affordabilityfund.org/>

Heating and Cooling Program

The Save On Energy program provides rebates up to \$850 for installing qualifying high-efficiency air conditioning or heating equipment.

<https://saveonenergy.ca/For-Your-Home/Home-Energy-Rebates/Heating-and-Cooling>

Energy company programs

Some energy companies sponsor home and appliance upgrade programs.

Union Gas' weatherization program:
<https://www.uniongas.com/weatherization>

Enbridge's winterproofing program:
<https://www.greensaver.org/consumer/enbridge/>

Hydro One's program for Indigenous customers in participating First Nations communities:
<https://www.hydroone.com/saving-money-and-energy/residential/first-nations-conservation-program>

Check with your home energy providers to see if they offer similar programs.

DID YOU KNOW



No change to minimum wage in 2019

On November 21, 2018, Bill 47 of the new provincial government of Ontario became law. This bill made important changes to the Employment Standards Act (ESA) that all Self-Managers should be aware of, including:

- Freezing the minimum wage at \$14 per hour until October 2020;
- Cancelling personal emergency leave days;
- Removing paid sick days; and,
- Removing the scheduling regulations expected in 2019.

These changes are so new that, as of the time this article was written, they were not yet on the Ministry of Labour website, but the changes can be expected soon. As Direct Funding is a self-managed attendant service program, participants are expected to keep abreast of ESA changes and to check in on the Ministry of Labour website as details become available: www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/es/ Participants may also call the Ministry of Labour with questions: **416-326-7160** or **1-800-531-5551**.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Northern Ontario Self-Manager wins entrepreneur award

The Kapuskasing Farmers Market, run by Loyola Sylvain, a farmer and Self-Manager (pictured with his wife, Suzanne), was recently named non-profit of the year at Kapuskasing's Chamber of Commerce's annual Business Awards.

The Disability Resource Centre for Independent Living, which was among the other eight non-profit organizations nominated, noted that nominees for this category must promote initiatives that make Kapuskasing and district a better place to live, provide a valued service to the community, encourage and provide growth opportunities to volunteers, staff and community peers.

Loyola has been farming

all his life; he was raised on the farm which he took over from his parents. After his spinal cord injury in 2010, he spent 10 months in the hospital. That was the only year that he was not at the Farmer's Market. However, he kept a garden throughout his whole rehab.

All of Loyola's machinery/tractors have been adapted for him to be able to continue his vocation. He still does all the labour work and receives some assistance from volunteers. He grows carrots, onions, potatoes, cabbage, beets, turnips, spaghetti squash, zucchini and tomatoes; in the winter he keeps busy by doing woodwork, and working with leather, making purses and wallets.

"We must keep our spirits



high. If not, things would not move forward," says Loyola. "We have to go ahead and always have dreams even if they are a bit wacky. We must have challenges and continue with what we have and by looking at the opportunities available to us."

Tribute Award for advocacy from Empower Kids Ontario



Kevin McShan, a Self-Manager living in Windsor, wrote to the Direct Funding Program: "Recently, I was honoured to receive a Tribute Award for advocacy from Empower Kids Ontario. The EKO Tribute Awards annually recognize individuals and organizations making significant contributions to the interests of kids with special needs and their families as advocates, leaders, and partners. I was

nominated by the John McGivney Children's Centre for my work in advancing employment equality for individuals with disabilities. I am emailing to share because one of my support workers, Nicholas Bellperche (pictured here on left) escorted me to Toronto to ensure I could receive the award in person. I figured you would be pleased to hear the Direct Funding program contributed to a good news story."

Self-Manager News

Innovation



Christopher Channon, a Self-Manager in Toronto, recently shared photos of a vacation he took to North Carolina, where he used a specialized wheelchair that helped with mobility on the beach.



Gary Froude, a Self-Manager in Port Carling in the Muskoka area, forwarded photos of a recent adventure he had obtaining his weight. As there was no scale locally that could accurately weigh him in his power wheelchair, he improvised and used the large scale at the local dump; a large bear was also on hand to observe the procedure.



Greg Moore, a Self-Manager in Kitchener, and his wife, Keri, recently welcomed twins Jesse and Dylan to the world.



Shawn Farrugia and his wife Chantelle, who live in Barrie, recently welcomed their son Kai earlier in 2018.

A magical night



KELLY FLEMING, GUELPH, ONT.

I had written an email last January to Roy Thomson Hall and also Joan Baez's production company ... I just wanted to let her know what a great influence she has been on my life. I asked if possible, after her tour, they could pass on my email to her. Following that email exchange, I heard back from the venue. They arranged for us to park in the security entrance, we had an usher with us the entire time. Box seats right over the stage. Afterwards we were being escorted back to the security entrance and as the usher was escorting us, he started getting giddy. When I came around the bend of the one hallway she was waiting to meet me. She talked to me and she was amazing.

Richard

Continued from p. 1



inflexible services, he had to shift his mindset to adapt to his new freedom.

Despite the challenges, the benefits of self-management were immediately apparent to Richard: "I was able to depend on myself for a lot of things, more than depending on my family." This took pressure off his mother, who had been his primary caregiver. Since the funding was attached to him and not his housing, he was able to receive attendant services at his workplace. Having the ability to manage his own staff also meant he could hire workers he enjoyed spending time with. As Richard explains, "The compatibility is more important than a piece of paper or a degree, because when you have somebody with you for those long periods of time during the day, you've got to get along, otherwise it's going to be a real long

day!" Richard worked hard to refine his recruitment and management strategies and now has a full roster of attendants, including one who has worked with him for 17 years.

Richard notes that the program's flexibility has benefited him through the health, family and career changes that have happened since he initially became a Self-Manager. Richard says his experience with the Direct Funding Program has been, "nothing but positive. It has allowed me to live my life the way I want, without burdening my family."

Having such a long tenure as a Self-Manager, Richard encourages people with disabilities to have more confidence in themselves and their organizational and problem-solving skills, which can serve them well on Direct Funding. He recommends that Self-Managers looking for new staff consider focussing on developing contacts through personal networks, as well as reaching out to local career resource centres and post-secondary educational institutions.

Richard hopes that more people will be able to benefit from the Direct Funding Program in the coming years. "On Direct Funding, people live lives, they partake, a lot of them are go-getters, they get involved within their communities," says Richard. "It's kind of hard to do that if you're in a home. With Direct Funding, you can engage in all those activities and help to make a difference ... And the beauty is, it's cost-effective, too. It's a win-win for all parties involved."

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Testimonial



I'm very grateful for your kindness. If it wasn't for Direct Funding I would be in a nursing home, but instead I get to be at home with my new dog Wilkie, who I love to spend time with.

**I'm very
thankful for
Direct Funding.**

Dan Kilburn, Matheson, Ont.



Direct Funding Program

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