

# balance

what it's all about

Brought to you by:  
Technology for Independent  
Living (TIL) and  
Provincial Respiratory  
Outreach Program (PROP)

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## STAFF CHANGES AT BCITS

BY RUTH MARZETTI |

Unfortunately, due to the loss of TIL's gaming funds, we have been unable to retain our biomedical technician (biomed) Samiko Guest. Samiko has been a member of the biomed team since 2008. In addition, our TIL biomed Kevin Choi has decided to move on from BCITS and go back to college; we will not be replacing him. I am sure you will join us in wishing both Samiko and Kevin all the best for the future. Kevin's and Samiko's departures leave us with only three working biomedes at Prop and TIL, so we are expecting an impact on TIL's service provisions. Part of TIL's strategic planning process

includes developing procedures that ensure our biomedes' work will be equally distributed across the province. With the reduction of the TIL biomed staff members, we expect there will be longer wait times than usual for TIL services. However, people receiving PROP's biomed services will not be affected by the change. We do hope to address the shortage of funds through TIL's ongoing funding strategy. If you have any questions regarding the services of either PROP or TIL, please contact Ruth Marzetti, Executive Director via email [rmarzetti@bcits.org](mailto:rmarzetti@bcits.org) or phone: **604 326 0175**. ●

## AGM and Social – Please Keep September 25<sup>th</sup> 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm free

BY RUTH MARZETTI |

This year our AGM will be held on Tuesday the 25<sup>th</sup> of September at Performance Works on Granville Island at 6:00 pm followed by a social event. We will be sending more details nearer the time. We had booked the room at Performance Works for a possible TIL fundraiser; however, we will not be going ahead with the fundraiser this year which leaves the room free for our AGM followed by a social event.

The AGM is open to all members if you receive services from PROP or TIL you are welcome! The social will be in conjunction with our Pathways to In-

dependence peer group and will be open to all who receive PROP and TIL services as well as IFRC clients. We will provide entertainment, food and fabulous door prizes!

Please keep your calendars free on the 25<sup>th</sup> of September. ●

### LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

If you have a story to feature please contact  
[sboren@stephenboren.com](mailto:sboren@stephenboren.com)

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## airG Hosts Bingo to Raise Funds for TIL Devices and Equipment

BY RUTH MARZETTI |

On Friday, June 1<sup>st</sup>, airG organized a bingo night to raise funds for TIL equipment and invited BCITS to join them. Five staff members from BCITS went downtown; they received a tour of the new, modern airG office, which included a fantastic view, before getting down to the business of playing some serious bingo.



The bingo night included a buffet of finger food. Two staff members from airG called the bingo game with the help of an online application. Everyone had a lot of fun playing bingo, and the ticket sales and some of the money raised from refreshments went towards the fundraising.



The BCITS staff enjoyed the friendly culture at airG. Enthusiastic energy filled the room, and there was a jovial vibe. It is impressive that airG staff members were committed to staying late on a Friday night to raise funds for our members so we can purchase environmental controls for people in need. Overall it was a successful and fun event. We are thankful to airG for inviting us and for helping us to raise the much-needed funds!

*airG started as a small Canadian company in 2000. The company has offices in Latin America, Middle East, and Eastern Europe. For more information see: <https://corp.airg.com/> ●*

## Pathways to Independence:

Vancouver based Peer Group

BY RUTH MARZETTI |

BCITS and the Individualized Funding Resource Centre (IFRC) have collaborated to bring Pathways to Independence, a peer group to discuss issues of interest to the group itself. Our first meeting focused on the Choice in Supports for Independent Living [CSIL] Program. The second meeting featured a demonstration of voice-activated technology available from the BCITS Technology for Independent Living (TIL) Program. This was followed by a CSIL questions and solutions discussion led by Paul Gauthier.

The group is facilitated by Paul Gauthier and Chris Hofley from IFRC. It's a safe space to discuss private issues. At this stage, we have decided not to broadcast the discussion across the internet or other video conferencing channels. The group aims to give people the opportunity to bring up topics of discussion and to network with peers in Vancouver. During the group meetings, there are a couple of breaks with coffee and light snacks served.

Pathways to Independence is a pilot project of four sessions: The last two sessions are on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> July and Monday 13<sup>th</sup> August at 12:15pm -3:00pm in the Sunset Community Centre Hall at 6810 Main Street, Vancouver. If you are driving to the meeting, please come early. There is street parking and a car park behind the centre; however, there is an on-going development at the back of the centre which may mean fewer available parking spots, so give yourself some additional time to find a good parking spot. ●

# After Hours Services: 1-866-326-1245

BY Sherry Shea



Did you know that PROP has an after-hours, on-call service for PROP clients? Just like our daytime on-call service, this is a very valuable and effective service that has served our PROP clients for many years and continues to do so.

Here is a quick Q & A about our after-hours, on-call service:

## **What is the phone number?**

The phone number is the same as the one you use to contact PROP during office hours:  
1-866-326-1245

## **What hours are the “after- hours”?**

Weeknights: Monday to Friday 4:30 pm to 8:30 am

Weekends: Friday 4:30 pm to Monday 8:30 am

## **Who will answer my call?**

Your call will be answered by an answering service and they will ask you your name, your phone number, and a brief description of your situation. This is communicated to an on-call Respiratory Therapist, who will respond to your call. If you are not called back right away, it may be that they are on the phone with another client.

## **When would I use the after-hours phone assistance?**

After-hours phone assistance is generally reserved for situations that cannot be resolved by the client or their caregiver with regular troubleshooting, and it cannot wait until PROP's regular office hours. For instance, an equipment or mask issue that is contributing to discomfort, and is interfering with a proper night's sleep; or the current settings on your machine do not feel comfortable, and you feel the need to change them in order to proceed with a restful night's sleep.

## **What if I've run out of supplies or my equipment is broken?**

PROP cannot send equipment or supplies during after-hours. Keeping this in mind, it is always recommended that you keep enough supplies and/or equipment on-hand for your individual needs. If you are falling short of either, please call during office hours to order supplies and/or request equipment. We are more than happy to discuss your needs with you.

In the event of a serious medical emergency, please call 9-1-1.

# Tips for Flying with your Ventilator (Or Bipap)

BY ROGER DESMARAIS |

## 1. **Contact the airline promptly after you have booked your flight:**

Contact the airline by phone to inform them of your use of a medical device during the flight. While most airlines require that 48-hour to 14-day advance notice to accommodate your medical device, it is best to call the airline promptly after you have booked your flight.

## 2. **Obtain a Medical Clearance:**

When contacting the airline, ask if you will need to fill out a medical clearance form (MEDIF or MEDA) or obtain a physician's note for your medical condition. Most airlines have their medical clearance forms online. Some airlines ask that you request a form when contacting them then they will either fax or email the form to you to fill out.

Will the device need to be approved by the airline company? If so, what information will you need to provide? Provide the equipment details either when first contacting the airline or on the medical clearance form, depending on the airline's procedures. All airlines require that the device has a manufacturer's label stating FAA approval for use on board.

## 3. **Have enough batteries to power your device for the full flight:**

Most airlines do not supply onboard electrical power. Therefore, most airlines only allow battery-operated devices to be used during the flight. For those airlines that do offer electrical power, the electricity may not be stable during the flight, nor guaranteed on every aircraft.

Are there any battery regulations? Closer to the departure date, contact the airline to ask for the maximum flight duration in order to determine the required number of batteries to bring. Most airlines require that you have enough batteries to power the device for 150% of the maximum flight duration. However, some airlines have a maximum limit of two spare batteries.

## 4. **Arrive the Airport Early with two copies of your medical clearance:**

While some airlines do not require more time than the advised normal check-in time, some airlines encourage that passengers with special needs arrive up to three hours before their departure time in order to make certain that they can undergo the check-in process and security clearance without problems.

Proceed to the airline's check-in counter, where the airline staff will make the necessary arrangements. Bring at least two copies of your medical clearance form or physician's note to the airport, and keep one of these copies with you at all times while traveling.

## **Would BiPAPs follow the same regulations?**

Most airlines have the same set of policies for all medical devices. You will also need to contact the airline company in advance for approval of your BiPAP for use on board. BiPAPs must be approved for electromagnetic interference standards, or else they may need to be turned off during takeoff and landing. ●



# Respiratory Therapy in the Eyes of a Student

BY  
IRISH MONTEMAYOR |



My name is Irish Montemayor, and I'm a student Respiratory Therapist at Thompson Rivers University. I've been given the privilege of becoming the first student to be a part of the PROP department of BCITS through funding from Canada Summer Jobs, a grant that "provides wage subsidies to employers to create employment for secondary and post-secondary students."

Before finding out about Respiratory Therapy, my passion was in the Performing Arts, which is essentially dance, music, theatre, and other performances done on stage. The entertainment aspect and the feeling of being on stage were a few of the reasons why I pursued a Bachelor of Performing Arts. However, the number one reason was to build on and to have the experience of being connected with the audience. Now that I've moved into the healthcare field, I am looking forward to entering my second year in the Respiratory Therapy program. I'm focused on transferring my knowledge and what I valued during my time as an artist into a future career as a Respiratory Therapist. My dedication is to build an excellent rapport, to connect, and to aspire to create a difference as a patient-centred Respiratory Therapist.

What I've learned as an artist is that anyone can practice an instrument for hours and perfect their skills. Nonetheless, if they don't care about the audience that they're playing for, they've lost sight of what's important and all of the work that they've put in was for nothing.

In conclusion, I will be graduating in the year 2020 and I anticipate on being your Respiratory Therapist someday. When that day comes, with my personal experience and what BCITS has shown me – the significance of implementing patient/client and health care team collaboration - I hope to establish that connection and to be mindful of your needs and the needs of others that I may impact a positive change. ●

## A CLIENT SATISFACTION SURVEY VIA PHONE

At BCITS, we are continually striving to improve our service to you, our client. Your views are extremely important to us since you, as a consumer, are the best person to tell us what we could do better. We have a great appreciation for our client's needs and wants.

We will be surveying people who have received services from our organization to learn about their experiences and opinions. We will only use the information you provide to help improve our services, and we will keep the information about you and your specific responses confidential.

Irish Montemayor, our Student Respiratory Therapist from Thompson Rivers University, will be contacting you by phone to conduct the survey. This voluntary survey will take less than 10 minutes to complete, and we will randomly select participants from our membership.

In advance, we thank you for your time and commitment to improving the BCITS service. ●



## Connect with us online! Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook

Social media is a powerful tool in today's world for connecting people and organizations, and spreading news and ideas.

At BCITS, we believe in maximizing people's quality of life as much as possible through technology, so we are excited to announce that PROP and TIL are now on Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook.

We want to connect with our current clients, future clients, professionals and organizations that support people with disabilities and independent living.

We will be posting PROP and TIL content on our website [www.bcits.org](http://www.bcits.org) and on the following social media accounts:

**Twitter:**  
[Technologyforliving@PROP\\_TIL](https://twitter.com/Technologyforliving@PROP_TIL)

**LinkedIn:**  
[The BC Association for Individualized Technology and Supports for People with Disabilities \(BCITS\)](https://www.linkedin.com/company/the-bc-association-for-individualized-technology-and-supports-for-people-with-disabilities-bcits/)

**Facebook:**  
[www.facebook.com/BCITS/](https://www.facebook.com/BCITS/)

Please help welcome us into the online community by following us! We look forward to connecting with you!

# balance

Balance is published three times a year by the BC Association for Individualized Technology and Supports for People with Disabilities (BCITS).

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**Coordinator** Seka Bojbasa  
**Editor | Designer** Stephen Boren

BCITS does not research, endorse or guarantee any of the products or services within the magazine. We strongly recommend investigating products and companies before purchasing or using them.

We are pleased to have content from Balance reprinted in other publications. Contact us with your request and please cite BCITS, Balance and the edition date when reprinting.

BCITS is the home of Technology for Independent Living (TIL) and the Provincial Respiratory Outreach Program (PROP).

## Mailing Address

#103-366 E. Kent Ave South,  
Vancouver, BC V5X 4N6

**TIL Phone** 604-326-0175

**PROP Phone** 1-866-326-1245

**Fax** 604-326-0176

**Email** [info@bcits.org](mailto:info@bcits.org)

**Web** [www.bcits.org](http://www.bcits.org)

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# help us fulfill our vision

BCITS, proud home of PROP and TIL, is a registered non-profit and charitable organization. The funds to operate these programs come from the Ministry of Health, through the Vancouver Coastal Health region. We are very grateful for this generous support.

However, this funding does not cover all the costs to provide equipment to TIL clients. For example, a universal assistive device could cost over \$1,000 and an automatic door opener can cost up to \$5,000.

We provide many devices like these to adults—at no cost—to fulfill our vision of people living in the community as independently as possible.

You can help us continue this work through your donation. Any contribution, large or small, will be gratefully accepted. 100% of your donation will go toward equipment and assistive devices.

*Charitable Registration Number 807477070RR0001*

## I would like to support TIL's equipment program.

- ☐ I have enclosed a cheque for \$ \_\_\_\_\_.
- ☐ I will make a donation by credit card through [CanadaHelps.org](http://CanadaHelps.org).  
[Donate in minutes by clicking on the DONATE button on our home page at [www.bcits.org](http://www.bcits.org).]
- ☐ I would like to donate directly by VISA. I will call you at 604-326-0175.

Please be sure to fill in all your contact details, so we can send your tax receipt (for donations of \$10 or more).

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY & PROVINCE \_\_\_\_\_ POSTAL CODE \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return form to: BCITS, #103-366 E. Kent Ave S., Vancouver, BC V5X 4N6**

# thank you for your support

## Changes in TIL

BY RUTH MARZETTI |

Over the last year, TIL has undergone a thorough strategic planning process in response to a cut in gaming funds as well as changes in emerging technologies. All of TIL's staff members, understand the importance of remaining flexible and nimble in response to the needs of you, our membership.

For three years, TIL has not received gaming funds which were once used to purchase environmental controls and equipment for our members. TIL recognizes the need to provide a viable and robust service, so we will be examining a next-level funding strategy that includes approaching grant-giving foundations and government agencies.

We are grateful for the on-going funding from Vancouver Coastal Health and the BC Rehab Foundation. With funding support from these organizations, we have been able to provide voice-activated technology such as Google Home or Amazon Alexa. Our biomedical engineering technologists (biomed) are able to program these devices to extend their functionality. We have found that with this type of technology people can open doors, turn switches on and off, and control the temperature of their homes. For people with limited voice projection, our biomed can adapt voice-activated controls so that they can be operated with a button or a sip and puff switch. All of this gives greater independence to people living at home.

In our surveys, you have asked us to provide quick phone support so you can work with TIL's biomed to troubleshoot equipment issues rather than wait for a visit - the TIL line will be made available for this purpose. On the technology front more good news, we are starting to examine how we can use video conferencing to assist you better with troubleshooting through equipment problems.

Additionally, the strategic plan includes increasing educational material - there will be more 'how to videos' produced this year as well as publications in this magazine and on our website [www.bcits.org](http://www.bcits.org). ●

## Getting to Know You

BY APRIL SKOLD -  
CLIENT SERVICES SUPPORT |

The song "**Getting to Know You**" from the **1951 Rodgers and Hammerstein musical *The King and I*** comes to mind as I talk to all of the wonderful people who are clients of PROP and TIL. Over the past few months, I have met many of you through chance encounters at the office or at the *Pathways to Independence* peer group.

I would like to relay how much strength, creativity and enthusiasm you share with us each day. Your pleasant hellos, stories and experiences are valued. You may have chosen to share with the Balance or through a video or conversation, or even shared your art forms with us over the years. I find myself learning more, and reflecting more on the paths others take in life. It is quite enlightening to be in someone else's world.



Recently someone one shared thoughts on the barriers they face as one person. From their perspective, they reflected on how others would be affected by the same barrier but with children.

I am reminded daily of the value that TIL services provide; for that ability to do what you want when you need to and to realize how important it is to have your independence and control.

As the world changes, we learn new

things. Armed with the experiences of others and new vocabulary the world grows smaller. Try to stop and see from another person's perspective whether through culture, lifestyle or from a socio-economic standpoint.

We learn so much from each other through lifestyles and culture. Encouragement comes from sharing and observing. Recently I met a homeless woman who takes an economics book with her to read, and a man who spends his days fundraising for the Special Olympics. When hearing of accomplishments and interests, and when faced with challenges, I certainly am inspired to do more.

I value the gift of perspective and knowledge. Thank you for your inspiration. ●

## The PROP trach vent course

BY WENDY LAWRENCE RN BSN |

The PROP trach vent course has been a staple of the PROP services for many years.

PROP clients, at whatever stage in their "membership" at PROP, have access to the training.

Training is offered to all PROP clients, their family members and personal care givers at no cost. On occasion we have requests from various health care agencies to teach their employees. For those individuals the agency is billed at a modest fee. The course is hosted at the PROP office once a month on the last Monday & Tuesday (with few exceptions) for two full days. The course will run with a minimum of 5 students and a maximum of 12 students.

For some clients, one or two key caregivers are trained and then these individuals become the educators for other caregivers employed by that client. PROP calls this training the trainer. This means that a client has the option to train future new caregivers on his/her own, with a focus specific to that client's unique style and needs. All of the course information is shared openly. Each student is provided with a course manual and all the instructional videos are available to the public on the BCITS website or YouTube ([www.bcits.org](http://www.bcits.org))

There are times when the PROP team of Respiratory Therapists and Registered nurse can "take the show on the road" and travel to your community. These arrangements require some coordination so whenever possible advanced planning makes for a

better experience. Sometimes one client will host the event and several clients living in the same community can participate.

The course provides general information to support caregivers in providing safe care using consistent techniques and home processing of reusable supplies.



The topics covered are:

- The Respiratory System
- Independent breathing
- Manual bagging
- Emergency preparedness
- Tracheostomy Care
- Humidification
- Suction equipment
- Tracheostomy suctioning
- Ventilators; breathing circuits; circuit cleaning and changes; How to safely remove water from the circuit.
- Alarms conditions and Trouble shooting
- Emergency precautions



# IS THE GRASS GREENER ON THE OTHER SIDE?

BY NANCY LEAR |

Almost 5-years ago (this October), I uprooted myself and moved from the freezing cold winters of Newfoundland to the hot, sunny summers of British Columbia. Not knowing a soul, I challenged myself to have a better quality of life! I certainly couldn't do it entirely on my own, so before I left Newfoundland, I was given the names of two well-known people educated in the specific areas I needed assistance: homecare funding and housing. Their support and guidance made things happen that I only dreamed of for many years.

With my new life, however, came obstacles I didn't know existed. One of those obstacles being, *crossing active railway train tracks*. Passenger trains in Newfoundland stopped running in **July 1969**, and the last freight train ran in **June 1988**. So, I didn't really have any prior experience with trains, in general, until I moved here. Yes, that's correct; there are no operating trains in Newfoundland!

In the summer of 2015, all things changed! It was a beautiful day, and luckily, as it turns out, plenty of people were out and about. My caregiver and I went on a grocery excursion and were coming from the Superstore walking/strolling along Rupert Street. We came to the crosswalk and saw four railway train tracks to cross over. I hadn't done this before and thought nothing of it until the unmentionable happened; the front tires on my power wheelchair slid down in the opening of the train tracks, and I was immobilized, I couldn't go forward, nor backwards! It was a grid-lock for sure. My caregiver attempted to lift the



the not-so-good. I've made awesome friendships, took my first cruise to the Mediterranean, increased my education and worked for two amazing non-profit organizations, and I'm just getting started! Is the grass greener on the other side? What do you think?

Nancy Lear ●

side frame of my power wheelchair, but it was too heavy even to budge the tires! A scary feeling of panic and helplessness came over me and for a split second the "what ifs" crept in.

As I said earlier, many people were around, and before we knew it a man on his bicycle scurried over to my rescue. With one strong jolt, he raised my tires up so I could drive my wheelchair forward and release me from the train tracks' grip! We shouted hoorays as he stayed with us, holding the side of my wheelchair until I made it safely to the other side. I have extreme gratitude towards that stranger who jumped in to help me that day. As my heart was pounding from the whole ordeal, relief doesn't begin to express my feelings of safety. I was elated! It's plain to see that it's not safe to cross any train tracks, and whenever I can I will avoid them completely.

With a new life comes new experiences, some good and some not-so-good. From 2013, when I arrived in British Columbia, my good experiences certainly have out-weighed

## Get TIL Summer Ready!

BY BIOMEDICAL DEPARTMENT |

Recently, Technology for Independent Living introduced a line of smart devices that will allow TIL clients to access their home environment using their voice or smartphone/tablet. The line of smart devices TIL is currently providing includes:

1. Google Home Mini
2. TP-Link Light Bulbs
3. TP-Link Smart Outlets
4. TP-Link Light Switches
5. Smart Thermostats

### Beat the Summer Heat

Seeing as summer is here now, it is a great time to start utilizing these devices to control both your temperature, and your home's temperature, using your voice. Here are some examples of what you can control, and how you'd control them...

- Google Home Mini and TPLink Smart Outlet (fan)
  - o "Ok Google, turn the fan on/off"
- Google Home Mini and a Smart Thermostat
  - o "Ok Google, lower the temperature by 3 degrees"
  - o "Hey Google, set the temperature to 18 degrees"
- Google Home and Smart Portable Air Conditioner\*
  - o "Hey Google, turn on the air conditioner"
  - o "Ok Google, set the air conditioner to 19 degrees"

Perhaps you'd like something simpler, like one switch (touch, puff, etc) to turn on/off a fan. We can help you with that too!

### Travel Smarter this Summer

Maybe you're thinking of travelling this summer; TIL smart devices can come in handy while you're away as well. Using your mobile phone/tablet, you can set your lights to come on in the evening for security reasons or turn on the air conditioner an hour before you're set to arrive back home – there's nothing like getting home to a cool house after a long, hot vacation!

If you have questions about TIL's new line of smart device offerings, other devices you can purchase to work with them, or want to get started, contact TIL at 604-326-0175 or email [til@bcits.org](mailto:til@bcits.org).

\*TIL does not supply Smart Portable Air Conditioners. If you purchase one, we might be able to make it work with our Google Home Mini...consult with TIL before you purchase! ●

## Respiratory Therapy corner

hints/tips

BY RT DEPARTMENT |

### Cleaning the Inner Cannula:

This is a task that is undertaken at least once daily every day of the year, and it is done because a clean, clear tube is the only way to get a full breath into the lungs from a ventilator. A blocked inner cannula can lead to complications with your ability to breathe. It is an extremely important step in our day to day routine so below is a brief refresher on what PROP currently recommends for this cleaning process.

The procedure is slightly different depending on what type of tracheostomy tube you have. A plastic tracheostomy tube and a metal Jackson tracheostomy tube have different cleaning recommendations.

#### For a metal Jackson Tracheostomy Tube:

1. Remove the inner cannula and place it in a container of saline.
2. Place a clean spare inner cannula into the tracheostomy tube.
3. Allow the inner cannula to soak in the saline for 10-15mins to loosen any hardened secretions.
4. Using the Tracheostomy cleaning brush, scrub the inside of the inner cannula clearing all mucus and secretions.
5. Rinse the inner cannula in fresh saline and allow to air dry before storing in a clean container.

#### For a plastic Tracheostomy Tube:

1. Remove the inner cannula and place it in a container of 3% hydrogen peroxide.
2. Place a clean spare inner cannula into the tracheostomy tube.
3. Allow the inner cannula to soak in the hydrogen peroxide for 10-15 minutes.
4. Using the Tracheostomy cleaning brush, scrub the inside of the inner cannula clearing all mucus and secretions.
5. Rinse the inner cannula in saline and allow it to air dry before storing in a clean container.

For a more detailed look at Stoma and Tracheostomy cleaning recommendations, please visit [www.bcits.org](http://www.bcits.org) to view our video on this topic. ●

## Moving On

BY KEVIN CHOI |

### Tell us about yourself

My name is Kevin and I was born in Seoul, South Korea. When I was 11 years old, I came to Canada on my own to study. After I graduated from high school, I went to BCIT to study in the Biomedical Engineering Program. I joined BCITS as a biomedical engineering technologist in November 2016. Unfortunately, I am resigning from my position with BCITS and my last day will be Friday, July 6, 2018.



### What was the best thing that you liked about this job?

It is very difficult to choose the one best thing that I liked about my job because there isn't any ... (JUST KIDDING). I've greatly enjoyed and appreciated the opportunities I've had to work with PROP and TIL clients. It was my privilege to build personal relationships with my clients and impact and influence to maximize their independent living.

### What do you plan to do after this?

I work very closely with occupational therapists, respiratory therapists, caregivers, and other health professionals to help disabled people live at home independently. Even though I am working as a technologist, I always try to learn about the types of diseases or health problems my clients have in order to assist and provide for them in the most efficient manner. It shocked me that so many of the diseases my clients contracted did not have any treatments or cures including ALS, MD, MS, and spinal cord injuries, among others. My work experiences and personal relationships with my clients have sparked my interest in the human body; therefore, I have applied to Trinity Western University's Pre-medicine Program. I would love to delve deeply into the nature of the human body and research different types of human diseases.

### How would you describe BCITS?

There is no doubt that BCITS is a client - focused organization. Everything we do here is to help our clients to maximize their independence. I joined BCITS as a young adult. I was an inexperienced college graduate, but with the help, support, and encouragement from my team and rest of the staff at BCITS I became a better worker and a better person. I felt very comfortable and had a lot of fun in a family-like and caring work environment. I truly will miss everyone at BCITS and I will cherish the special memories I had at BCITS. ●

## Requiem for my Van

BY KATHY GRANT |

Well, a long-delayed decision has been made recently. My roommate decided to get rid of my old wheelchair van in June. A few years ago, with the help of many people, I purchased a newer wheelchair van, and my roommate bought my old one for his personal use.



When I first purchased the Van back in 2001, it wasn't much to look at. It was an old HandyDART van that had been converted to propane during the 90's and driven hard. Fortunately, it had been kept in good shape and was at a reasonable price that I could afford at the time. When I got it, the van had a major positive impact on my quality of life. For several years, it was my default means of transport. We needed groceries; we took my van. We needed to go to the bank; we took the van. We wanted to visit friends; we took the van. I needed to go to a medical appointment; we took the van. When we needed to go to the meetings that revolved around the formation of Community Living British Columbia; we took the van. And though it didn't work out the way that I hoped, the two years spent working first with the Community Living Coalition and then with the Transition Steering Committee are still a significant portion of my life. Had it not been for freedom of choice that having the van gave me, I doubt that I could have been able to participate.

Fast forward to today. As I said, I still have a van today, and it has been a Godsend to me on several occasions. However, it is no longer my default means of getting around, transit is. This fundamental change in my attitude had been gradual; in fact, over the past seventeen years, but it really took off in 2010 with the introduction of the Canada Line and the improved bus service near my home. Suddenly, I could get to many parts of Metro Vancouver in around an hour. As well several major commercial projects were completed, which delivered services I both needed and wanted closer to where I lived and on major transit routes. So, if I want to go shopping or need to do something else, Lougheed Mall, Metrotown, heck even Coquitlam Centre are now within reach. Not to mention the improvements to the New Westminster Station and the Marine Drive Station allowing for reasonable alternatives. That is, not to mention venues like the Roundhouse Community Centre that have become real go to places for disability functions.

All of this talk about transit may sound strange, but looking back on how I used my van compared with today has really caused me to think. We (meaning the disability community in general) complained all the time about how difficult it was to get around the Lower Mainland. While there are still a lot of problems, I think it is equally important to pause and reflect on just how far the community has come, and that overall the last twenty years has seen significant improvements to disabled people's ability to get around. Just some food for thought. ●

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