

what it's all about balance

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Remembering Jeanette Andersen

BY CHRISTINE GORDON

Jeanette Andersen spent much of her adolescence in an iron lung looking at the world through a tiny mirror positioned near her head.

There is a beautiful photograph of her from this time, gazing lovingly at her mother. That loving gaze is one that Jeanette gave to so many people in her life—family, friends and strangers. She possessed a remarkable openness to the world, perhaps because she had spent so many years with only a mirror. Her presence always took the rough edges off life because she was sincerely kind, generous and empathetic in any encounter with anyone.

She forgave everyone even when they behaved badly. She believed that there was always a solution as

long as good people came together and forged one. She was the quiet diplomat in any gathering, always looking for the best in people and usually finding it because people wanted to meet her expectations.

Jeanette was involved in so many projects like: working to make her eventual home, Noble House, a model for accessibility; helping to create the Provincial Respiratory Outreach Program; collaborating with other Board members at Disability Alliance BC to enable equality and inclusion for people with disabilities; and, advising the City of Vancouver through its Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee. Jeanette rarely said no to an opportunity to advise, bear witness or testify.

She mentored Pearson residents because she loved her home and she wanted others to have the chance to create their own.

Jeanette was a founding member of PROP and an active TIL user. She and Heather Morrison became our peer leaders when PROP was created and Jeanette retained this role until her death. Losing both Simon Cox and Jeannette within the last few months is quite a blow for all of us at BCITS. Their loss compels us to reflect on their legacies. One of Jeanette's legacies will surely be that an open heart can change the world. ●



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Jeanette's Life Touched Many Others

Jeanette was admitted to Vancouver General Hospital May 16, 2016 due to pneumonia. Other medical conditions arose which were treated with Jeanette's full understanding and approval. Near the end of May, Jeanette began to lose her appetite. She made the educated and conscious decision to refuse enteral feeding tubes which the family supported as these were her wishes. Jeanette passed away June 7, 2016, peacefully with family and friends at her bedside.

Chris Andersen

I met Jeanette Andersen in 1968 when I was injured. Jeanette was in Ward 7 of Pearson Hospital, known in those days as the Polio Ward.

Jeanette was a person that inspired me greatly, by living a meaningful life, even though she was paralyzed by polio and ventilator-dependent. She was one of the most influential mentors to me at that time because of who she was and how she lived her life. She gave great hope.

I continued to see how Jeanette inspired many people, over many years. She was a most influential person who has left us with much.

Walt Lawrence

Jeanette was a beautiful, active 16-year-old when she contracted polio during the epidemics of the 1950's, before the polio vaccine was developed. The virus left her paralyzed, other than the ability to turn her head and move a couple of fingers on one hand. She was in an iron lung for several months, until she regained enough muscle strength to breathe independently for short periods. She never recovered any other movement.

Jeanette stayed in VGH until she was well enough to move to the Pearson Polio Pavilion. As she became stronger, she was able to sit up in a manual wheelchair. At that time, there were no power wheelchairs, no portable ventilators and no Handy-DART or adapted vans. Unless you could be lifted into a car seat or laid on a stretcher in a station wagon, you were stuck in the Pavilion.

The Pavilion's Occupational Therapist worked with each polio survivor to find something interesting to occupy their time and strengthen the muscles they had. Jeanette chose oil painting by holding a brush in her mouth. She was innately artistic, with a good eye for colour, composition and perspective. Her expertise grew and she painted scenery, still life and portraits. Rafe Mair, a BC Cabinet Minister in the mid 1970's, commissioned Jeanette to paint his portrait.

When power wheelchairs became readily available in the early 1970's, Jeanette's life took on a new dimension. She regained a feeling of independence, being able to go where she wanted. She loved the outdoors

and went for walks around the park-like Pearson grounds and ventured across the street to the strip mall at Langara Towers.

At that time, there was only a sidewalk on the Pearson side of the street, not the mall side, so darting through traffic between parked cars was the only way to access the driveway to the shops. Jeanette felt this was too dangerous so she decided to have a sidewalk built. This was the beginning of her activism for people with disabilities and her first interaction with Vancouver City Hall.

She began by phoning various City Departments, eventually learning it was not the City's responsibility to build a sidewalk there, but Langara Towers'. Jeanette was not discouraged. She approached staff from the Towers and, after months of negotiation, a sidewalk was built. Jeanette had remarkable people skills. She was persistent, persuasive and patient—vital traits to be a successful advocate.

In 1992, after living at Pearson for 37 years, Jeanette and six others moved into the Noble House Co-operative at False Creek. Jeanette was a leader in its planning and continued that role after she moved in. She was involved in the management of the Co-op, serving on the Board for many years, and was the go-to person for the tenants when disputes arose. She was fair-minded and a good listener, so she could usually mediate a mutually-agreeable resolution.

She also spear-headed the planning of the Co-op's gardens. She was knowledgeable about plants, and her art background served her well

in designing and planting to achieve the best colour harmony and balance.

The enormous amount of time, knowledge and experience she gave to various community groups is well known. Her advice was sought after and often implemented, leading to awards of appreciation and excellence. Her long-time friend, Jimmy O'Connell, drove her to her many meetings and events, and was truly her right-hand man.

Her close-knit family members were always available to assist her. Her brother, Chris, was her technology expert whenever her power chair, phone, computer or other devices malfunctioned. She often said that she could not have lived successfully in the community, doing so many things, if it were not for Jimmy and her family.

Jeanette was intelligent, perceptive, kind and generous. Her glass was half-full and she could see the good in everyone. She appreciated classical music, was a voracious reader and enjoyed good food. We frequently gathered at her place to celebrate special occasions with a delicious meal. Jeanette faced her many challenges with incredible courage, acceptance, dignity and grace. It has been a blessing and a privilege to share in her life's journey.

continued on next page



Jeanette Andersen, continued from previous page

Looking Back (author unknown)

As we look back over time, we find ourselves wondering,

Did we remember to thank you enough for all you did for us?

For all the times you were by our side to help and support us, to celebrate our successes, to understand our problems and accept our defeats?

Or for teaching us by your example the value of hard work, good judgement, courage and integrity?

We wonder if we ever thanked you for all the time and energy you spent to give us your best, and for the simple things like all the good times we shared?

If we forgot to show our gratitude enough for all the things you did, we are thanking you now, and we are hoping you knew all along how much you meant to us.

Joy Lynn Kjellbotn, a friend for 60 years and a fellow polio survivor

I first met Jeanette in 1986. Over the years, I worked with her on many disability advocacy issues, such as deinstitutionalization; the redefinition of the provincial policy addressing disability; criteria to include people with mental health and developmental issues; accessible social housing; home support; accessible public transportation; and, much more.

Jeanette was very involved in the saving of GF Strong and in changing the culture at the George Pearson Centre.

What I most respected Jeanette for was her sincere ability to remain positive no matter how many challenges were faced in reaching a solution.

I have lost a very good friend.

Margaret Birrell

Working as a Respiratory Therapist with PROP gives me the opportunity to meet many wonderful people who have left a lasting impression on me. Jeanette Andersen was one of those people. She left such a strong impression on me personally, as well as professionally.

With her humble, unassuming manner, she showed me about the real reason I entered the field of health-care: to help, to be there for others, to advocate for others and to live on purpose.

What a beautiful gift Jeanette has helped me uncover. Rest peacefully, Jeanette.

Elaina Zebroff

I feel honoured and lucky to have associated with Jeanette for such a long time. I wish I could have a fraction of her goodness and kindness. I have not met a person in my life that was as good as Jeanette, who had no complaints and spent most of her time helping others.

I was and still am the beneficiary of her whole being. She was a wonderful person, a wonderful human being who inspired many people. May she rest in peace.

Jimmy O'Connell ●

balance

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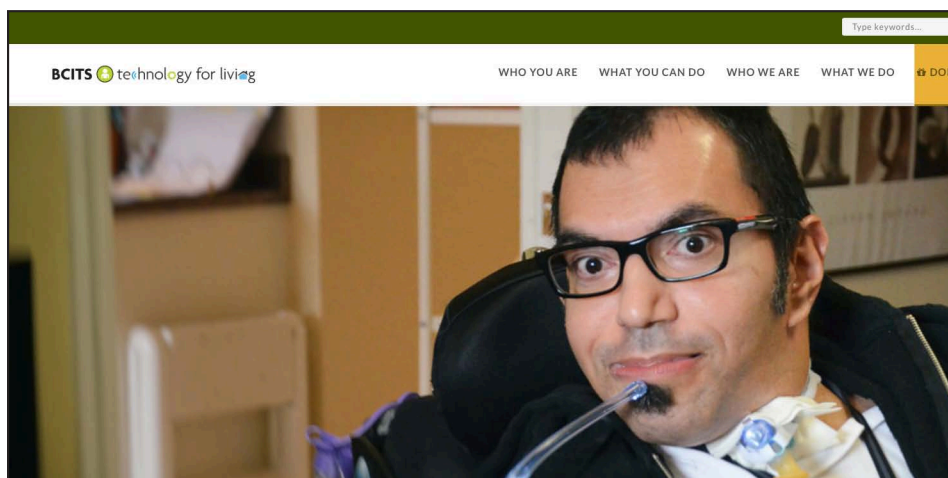
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Welcome to the New BCITS Website

BY RUTH MARZETTI

You may have noticed that BCITS has a fresh new website. If you have not seen it yet, please take a look at bcits.org.

The new website is easier to navigate and find information, and it has a cleaner modern look. Clicking on the "BCITS Technology for Living" logo quickly gets you back to the home page.

The information from our old site was audited. The content we decided to keep has been streamlined and organized.

The new site is divided into easy-to-follow sections: *Who You Are*, *What You Can Do*, *Who We Are* and *What We Can Do*.

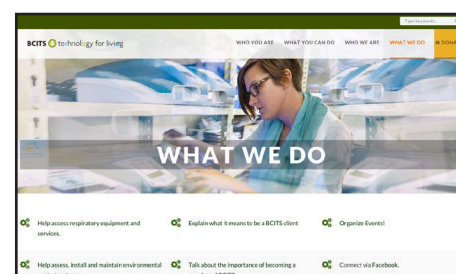
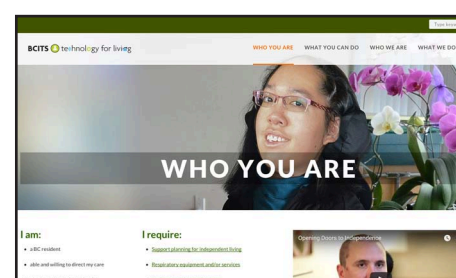
All the information you need about our two programs, Provincial Respiratory Outreach Program (PROP) and Technology for Independent Living (TIL), is still available on the new website.

New features include an up-to-the-minute news blog by staff and clients. We also have an events page where upcoming peer activities will be posted. Among other things, the

events page currently features our AGM and the Kinsmen/BCITS 4th Annual Golf Tournament on September 15.

Thank you to the clients who generously gave permission to use their photographs and thank you to the staff who worked on the content for the new site.

The site will be constantly changing and growing. If you have any comments about the website or would like to contribute to the blogs with your own story, please contact me at rmarzetti@bcits.org. ●



About Our Tribute to Simon Cox

After reading your wonderful Tribute to Simon Cox, I just had to write and let you know how much it meant to me.

Simon came into my life in the late 70's, when I was only a few years into using assistive technology. We instantly connected. It's clear from the Tribute that many other people felt that way. He became a dear and cherished friend.

Thank you so much for your amazing memorial to a man who meant so much to so many people. His gentle, caring manner, his ingenuity, his sense of humour....you touched on it all and then some! And I appreciated learning more about Simon than I had known before.

If you have room in the next Balance for this short letter to Simon, I would be grateful.

Dear Simon:

I wish I could tell you how many times I have wanted to call and talk something over with you. You were always there for me, and so many others. We always had such interesting visits—from what was going on in my situation, to your hopes for the future of technology for people with disabilities, to trying to help me publish my children's book!

From the time you walked into my life to our last cherished phone visit, you have been more than a source of help, ingenuity, technical advice and mentoring. You have been my dear, caring and precious friend.

How I miss you!

JoAnn Brekkaas ●

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 the costs to provide equipment to TIL clients. For example, a special telephone for a person with a high level disability can cost as much as \$1000 and an automatic door opener can cost \$3000.

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 enclose a cheque for \$ _____.
- ☐ I will make a donation by credit card through CanadaHelps.org.
[Donate in minutes by clicking on the CanadaHelps button on our home page at www.bcits.org.]
- ☐ I would like to donate directly by VISA. I will call 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

Accessible Elk Falls Park and Suspension Bridge

BY SHERRY SHEA

In 2009, the Rotary Club had a vision of building one of the most spectacular tourist destinations in all of Campbell River. After several years of fundraising efforts and community support, the Elk Falls Suspension Bridge project was completed in May 2015.

Not only can I say from personal experience that the scenery and air are breathtaking, but the display of engineering genius is also a marvel to behold. Best of all though, there is a wheelchair accessible pathway to viewing platforms.

A short distance down a wheelchair-accessible pathway, you'll find the first of a series of platforms offering stunning views of the 25-metre falls. While you are perched there, you will hear the thunder, feel the rumble and enjoy the mist of the falls kissing your face. This is nature at its best and most beautiful.

With our summer weather approaching, I encourage you to get out there and check it out if you are

passing through or if you live in the area!

Elk Falls Park is a very quick trip from the centre of Campbell River:

To get to the Elk Falls Park Suspension Bridge in Elk Falls Park, travel north from Downtown Campbell River to the Highway 19a and Highway 19 intersection which is just north of Campbellton. Continue northwest on Highway 28 toward Gold River and travel about 4.5 kilometres to the top of the big hill (General Hill).

At the top of General Hill on the right hand side of Highway 28, you will see a sign to Elk Falls Provincial Park and the BC Hydro Interpretative Centre. Turn right. From the parking lot, there is excellent signage to direct you to the old growth forest and the suspension bridge.

Here is a link to Elk Falls information on the BC Parks website:
http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/elk_falls/ ●



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.

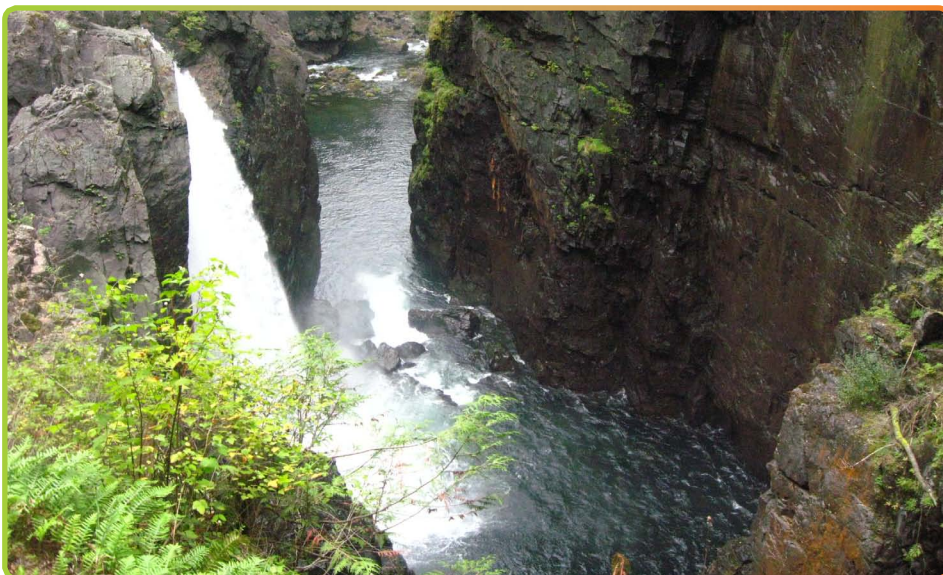
We will be posting PROP and TIL content on our website www.bcits.org and on the following social media accounts:

Twitter: @PROP_TIL

LinkedIn: The BC Association for Individualized Technology and Supports for People with Disabilities (BCITS)

Facebook: technology for living

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



Yes, I Accept Your Invitation to Join BCITS

The BC Association for Individualized Technology and Supports for People with Disabilities (BCITS) Home of Provincial Respiratory Outreach Program (PROP) & Technology for Independent Living (TIL)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/Prov: _____ Postal Code: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

**Please mail this form along with any applicable membership fees to BCITS:
#103-366 E. Kent Ave S., Vancouver, BC V5X 4N6. Thank you.**

Please Check One

- ☐ **Membership for Registered BCITS Clients** Please mail completed form to BCITS (the cost of postage constitutes your membership fee)
- ☐ **Non-client Membership** Please mail completed form along with \$20 annual membership fee payable to BCITS.

BCITS  technology for living 



Golfers—Join us for the 4th Annual Golf Tournament!

BY RUTH MARZETTI BCITS and the Kinsmen are partnering once again for our 4th Annual Golf Tournament—come rain or shine, the event will be held in the beautiful setting of Mayfair Lakes Golf and Country Club, Richmond, on Thursday, September 15th.

In addition to a day of golfing, the tournament includes a Texas Scramble with Shot Gun Start, lunch and an after-golf putting competition.

Mark Madryga and Jim Watson will be the MCs for the evening which includes dinner, lively entertainment and the opportunity to bid on auction items, door prizes, and goodies bags for all.

A highlight of the evening will be an opportunity to bid on an overnight rail trip on the legendary “Canadian” to the incredible mountain town of Jasper and the famous Jasper Park Lodge. This prize, generously donated by Via Rail, features glass

dome carriages to view the beautiful scenery, a cabin for two with beds, meals in the dining car and a lounge areas to enjoy a drink. More information can be seen at: <http://www.via-rail.ca/en/explore-our-destinations/trains/rockies-and-pacific/toronto-vancouver-canadian>

The proceeds of the Tournament go toward our Open Door Fund that has already benefited many of our clients.

To see how the Open Door Fund has helped our clients, please watch our video at: <http://bcits.org/event/the-4th-annual-bcitskinsmen-classic-golf-tournament/>

We are appealing to golfers to sign up early to avoid disappointment! You can buy your tickets through our website at the above link or by phoning our office at 1-866-326-1245.

We hope to see you there! ●