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balance

... what it's all about

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Canadian Assisted Travel Society
Helping disabled Canadians with their travel needs

Moving forward

By Ruth Marzetti

I would like to take this opportunity to share a few pieces of news with our readers as much is happening in our community and at Technology for Living! The challenges of the last couple of years, living through a global pandemic (still not 100% behind us) has taught us one important thing: keep up a positive attitude, foster a team spirit and together we can counter any challenge arising. Technology for Living is excited to embrace new beginnings and we think of them as times of possibilities, growth, and opportunity.

As many of you know, Technology for Living (TFL) has partnered with other community groups to facilitate the transition of the first 44 George Pearson Centre residents to their new homes at Cambie Gardens. Thanks to a foundation grant, our Technology for Independent Living (TIL) program has been working at the George Pearson Centre throughout the pandemic to provide technology helping the residents to communicate with friends and family during the COVID lockdown. TIL has also been setting up residents with technology to support their lives in their new homes in Cambie Gardens and will continue to offer technical assistance. (For the full story see the article on page 10). Recently members of our Peer Support Team had the chance to visit the completed residences and gave them an enthusiastic thumbs up.

Ean Price, TFL's Innovation Strategist is also taking on the role of Team Lead for our new TFL Peer Support Team. With Ean in this role, the TFL Peer Support Team is destined to become a vibrant addition to our overall organisation.

More news: TIL has been consolidated to better meet the technical and biomedical needs of our members throughout the province. I encourage you to check out TIL's ongoing WE TALK TECH videos on our YouTube Channel where we discuss new technology and initiatives on an ongoing basis.

The Provincial Respiratory Outreach Program (PROP) has had an incredibly busy time during the pandemic. We have reshuffled the program to ensure continuing excellent services and care.

At Technology for Living, we keep moving forward and are trying new ways of doing things to make sure we continue to offer the best we can for our members.

(From L-R) Taylor Danielson, Nicole Whittington and Ean Price, TFL's Peer Support Team, visiting Cambie Gardens.

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Technology for Living houses the Provincial Respiratory Outreach Program (PROP 1.866.326.1245) and the Technology for Independent Living Program (TIL 604.326.0175). PROP is funded by the Province of British Columbia Ministry of Health through Vancouver Coastal Health. TIL is funded by the Province of British Columbia Ministry of Health and other independent funders.

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Staff BBQ. Earlier this summer the entire Technology for Living team was finally able to enjoy an in-person event: a wonderful BBQ. Like most other social events during the last two years, we also had to forego fun, friendly get togethers with colleagues. But finally it became possible again and despite the weather not being at its best, everyone enjoyed themselves. A big shout out to our grill masters Wayne, Jerzy and Lily! The burgers and hot dogs were perfect. And of course the abundance of home made desserts were another huge hit with the crowd! Everyone is looking forward to 2023!

The Youth Assistive Technology (YAT) Program. Technology for Living strives to remove the barriers of stigma, dependency and isolation that prevent individuals with physical challenges from more fully participating in their homes and communities by providing assistive technology to increase independence. Today, thousands of youths, in BC, live with a severe physical disability and multiple access barriers. This can make normal activities such as learning, playing, or simply experiencing the world a huge challenge. YAT provides needs-based assistive technology and innovative ideas that create or enhance social inclusion and belonging. YAT was initiated by adults who grew up with a progressive disease or SCI and parent groups who want more support for their children. Help us provide voice activated devices and environmental controls so youth can open their own doors, control their bed, lights, room temperature with devices which are easy for them to control.
To refer a youth or to donate contact **rharrison@technologyforliving.org**

(From L-R) Will (Leafi founder), Ace (TIL team member), Marisa (BCIT practicum student with TIL), Wayne (TIL team lead), AJ (Leafi team member)

Leafi is a local Vancouver startup in the process of creating a SMART window blind control. TIL is always on the lookout for new assistive technology that potentially can be used to increase independence in the home for our peers. So we were excited to help out this young company by doing some testing and comparison with other competing products. While Leafi's product is now in beta testing phase, it will be a while before it gets into full production mode. Ideas for other potential assistive devices are also in the pipeline but the team at Leafi is currently focusing on bringing the window blind controller successfully to market.

Bits & Bytes from TIL

New TIL Solutions

Here are a few examples of recent discoveries we are now setting up for our members:

***Sunsa Wand** – This is a SMART wand-style blind control that does not require a hub or mounting to your wall. It works with Google, Alexa, and with your SMART device. The system uses AA batteries. But based on our testing, those batteries won't need changing for a long time!*

***Switchbot Lock** – Switchbot has extended their product line to include a new SMART lock. Although we think it doesn't look as sleek as 'August' locks, we believe they will work well for our members who have mortise-type locks.*

CONTACT US!

We are always happy to discuss any member's needs. Simply phone us at

☎ 604.326.0175

or send an email to

info@technologyforliving.org

TIPS & TRICKS

Switching WIFI providers

TIL continues to receive 'emergency' requests from members, who have changed WIFI providers and now: nothing works. We do want to help but with a small team of techs and a large province, we won't be able to assist for at least a few days.

Please give us plenty of notice so we can ensure a TIL Tech is available before changing your WIFI set provider.

Video games are breaking accessibility barriers

By Taylor Danielson

Videogames have been a lifelong passion of mine. My first video game system was a Game Boy. From there I went through various consoles starting with the Nintendo 64 through to the Xbox 360 before I finally settled onto my preferred medium: PC gaming. While I have had a disability since birth, its progression has not affected my ability to play video games until the past few years when I entered my late 20s. Now, when I am scrolling through the latest game releases, what I am looking for in the games has changed from "Do I want to play that?" to "Can I play that?"

That is a question nobody should have to ask [unless they are pestering an older sibling for their turn to play]. Unfortunately, this question continues to be relevant for gamers with disabilities to the point that there is a website called 'caniplaythat.com.' Its sole purpose is to answer that question – their tagline is "for disabled gamers, by disabled gamers".

If you are looking to get started in the accessible gaming space, where do you even begin? You are in luck. There are many resources and organizations which specialize in making gaming inclusive for everyone regardless of ability. Your first stop should be AbleGamers (ablegamers.org) to explore their extensive self-help library which tackles everything from general assistive technology to "how to play videogames with specific conditions" (e.g., quadriplegia or a visual impairment). If you don't find the answer to your questions using the self-help library, they also offer one-on-one peer counselling to support your gaming journey.

A lot of effort has been put into making games accessible from the ground up over the past few years. It is no longer an afterthought. Developers are considering and integrating accessibility from the outset. The recent release of "The Last of Us 2" has set a high bar for accessibility standards with a tremendous suite of options to allow players to tweak their gaming experience to a degree never seen before. Over 60 options allow players with visual, hearing, and fine motor control differences to modify how to play the game, making it work best for them.

Accessible gaming is a hot topic and has an extremely bright future! If you've ever asked yourself the question, "Can I play that?", the answer these days is increasingly, "Yes and here's how." Organizations that exist to help people play video games regardless of ability are now a central part of the gaming world. Happy gaming!

INHALE / EXHALE

When was the last time you used your bilevel (Stellar 150) or ventilator on the internal battery? PROP recommends that you use your device on its' internal battery once a month. This practice is an important part of every emergency preparedness plan. It will give you a good indication of how long your device will function in a power outage and allows you to plan for trips and outings more safely. You want to be confident that your device will work when you need it the most. If you have any questions about your specific unit, please discuss this with an RT or biomed during your next home visit.

CONTACT US!
If you need respiratory advice or support please contact the PROP team at
☎ 1.866.326.1245

IDEA CORNER

VIHA has a new Community RT group! If you live on Vancouver Island and you need additional support at home beyond what PROP can provide, you can refer yourself to this community program by calling the Community Access line: 250-739-5748. Please be aware that services may differ depending on the area in which you live.
PHN is required.

Lung health in hot times

By Elizabeth Goodfellow

Summer is a time when all of us like to spend a lot of time outdoors, having fun in the sun. The risk of poor outdoor air quality becomes very relevant. While BC enjoys good air quality for much of the year, occurrences of wildfires and heat waves can significantly impact the quality of the air around us.

Air quality issues can be caused by just one thing or by a combination of factors. Understanding what is affecting the air quality can be used as a tool to help our lungs.

Smog

Anyone who has ever taken a ferry during summer and looked back towards Vancouver, has seen smog: it's that yellow, dusty haze hanging over the city and surrounding mountains.

Smog is made up of many different kinds of air pollutants, but the main offenders are ground-level ozone and fine particulate matter.

Ozone that is found higher in the earth's stratosphere is considered good ozone because it helps protect earth from the sun's rays. Ozone that is found at ground level is formed when nitrogen oxide and volatile organic compounds (vehicle exhaust, factory emissions etc.) react with sunlight. This 'bad ozone' usually peaks between noon and 6pm in the summer months.

Fine particulate matter is another big contributor to smog (it comes from many sources including vehicle exhaust, road dust, construction, industry, forest fires etc.). The size of these fine particles matters a lot. Particles that are about the width of a human hair or less, can find their way deep into our lungs and settle there, eventually causing lung and other health problems. Particles of this size carry further and stay longer in the air therefore increasing the risk they pose.

Smog is a big hazard for people with existing heart and lung conditions; it can also cause irritation to your eyes, nose and throat and people may develop chronic coughing and headaches. Over time and with repeated exposure, there can be permanent lung damage.

Heat Dome, Heat Wave, it's HOT!

Hot weather can particularly increase smog and it is worse if there is no wind or breeze to clear the smog away at night. If it happens to be humid at the same time, it spells even more trouble. Hot air has a higher water content which sometimes causes the nerves in our lungs to narrow and tighten, making it harder to breathe. Humid air more easily traps allergens and other pollutants which can make existing lung conditions worse.

Use AQI to monitor air quality

Environment Canada monitors air quality and reports on it using the Air Quality Index (AQI) (*weather.gc.ca/airquality/pages/provincial_summary/bc_e.htm*). Many weather apps also carry information about air quality. It's good practice to regularly check for any alerts. If the air quality is poor, it is recommended that individuals with pre-existing conditions stay indoors or limit their time outdoors. The higher the AQI, the worse the air quality!

T'is the season to BBQ?

By Marnie Essery

Winter, spring, summer, or fall? In my opinion, any season is BBQ season!

Indeed, there are many people who think there is nothing wrong with putting on a parka, tuque and gloves to cook their burgers in the snow.

But sunny weather and being outside and socializing with family and friends — whether it be in the backyard, at a campsite, beach, or park — is probably still considered *the* quintessential BBQ tradition.

When someone invites you to a BBQ

Having a disability means that you have to consider things that other guests do not. Here are some suggestions of what you may want to find out ahead of time

- Is there accessible parking close to the location where the barbecue is being held or will you have to negotiate difficult parking scenarios that may make it impossible to get to the barbecue location?
- Is there an accessible washroom that you can use if you need it?
- Will food and drinks be on tables that are accessible to reach?

If you are a guest at a BBQ, there may be some things you want to let your host know before the event:

- you need to bring a caregiver or other companion
- you have major food allergies and/or food restrictions

Have fun and embrace your inner extrovert but ...

Mingling at barbeques is a great way to meet new people but sometimes challenging if you are physically, visually or hearing impaired.

As someone living with a disability, I occasionally got stuck with someone, and found myself unable to change conversation partners. In the end, I excused myself by saying that I was getting another drink or needed to use the restroom.

Take a social opportunity like a BBQ to move around to talk to as many different people as possible.

Tequila or Margaritaville?

If you plan to have some alcohol, make responsible decisions about how you will be getting home ahead of time. Booking an accessible taxi cannot be done spontaneously. Unfortunately, most cities do not have a large number of accessible taxis and most of them are often booked well in advance. Handy Dart can be like a lottery, 'you just never know.' People who use this service suggest booking 7-14 days ahead of time and being flexible in your pick-up and drop off times.

Accessible picnic locations around VICTORIA

Check out:
travelingbc.com/accessible-beaches-victoria-bc/

Special Tip: Esquimalt Lagoon, Victoria
travelingbc.com/esquimalt-lagoon/

Accessible picnic locations around VANCOUVER

Check out:
vancouver.ca/parks-recreation-culture/spanish-bank-beach.aspx

Special Tip: Belcarra Regional Park
metrovancouver.org/services/parks/reservable-facilities/facilities/belcarra-picnic-area-shelters

OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES:

6 tools that make it easy to grill with a disability
ca.finance.yahoo.com/news/6-tools-easy-grill-disability-214647410.html

iAccess Life app
Use the iAccess Life app available for both iPhone and Android to find peer reviewed picnic areas in your neighbourhood and around the world

Canadian Food SafetyTips for barbecuing
canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/general-food-safety-tips/food-safety-tips-barbecuing.html

Bon Voyage from CATS

by Ann Marie Davison

The last 2 years very much shut down the possibility to do much of anything due to the pandemic restrictions. Now, in 2022, things are slowly turning around and a lot of folks are looking to return to a *favourite* activity: traveling. Traveling is marvelous for providing opportunities to reconnect with family or friends, to see and do new things, to experience different cultures and foods, and to make new friends. But like everything in life for a person with a disability, traveling requires more planning and more money, especially if you need an attendant/care person. The Canadian Assisted Travel Society (CATS) might be able to help. The mission of CATS is to make available financial assistance to those adults with a bona fide disability who qualify and require a personal care attendant when traveling. CATS is also available to present educational seminars on traveling for people with disabilities.

CATS was founded by Monica Gärtner, a woman with many talents, a contagious laugh, and author of *"Overcoming the Impossible – A Life of Trial and Triumphs"* (available at monicagartner.ca). Monica knows first-hand both the thrills and challenges of traveling the world in her power wheelchair alongside her attendant. She has traveled to over 15 different countries on multiple continents.

Nicole Whitford, Community Advisor with Technology for Living, [see her profile in the March 2022 issue of the Balance], serves on the CATS Board, along with Denis Vaillancourt and Ann Marie Davison. Nancy Lear, who worked at TFL until her passing in December, also served on the CATS Board. Nancy was passionate about traveling, publishing various articles in the Balance newsletter over the years, describing her traveling adventures.

The travel grants CATS provide are specifically designated to defer some of the costs of traveling with an attendant. CATS' first grant recipient traveled to Disneyworld in Orlando, Florida to celebrate surviving a battle with cancer. Another grant helped pay for a couple also visiting Disneyworld, but this celebration was for their honeymoon! Being able to cross visiting Thailand off her bucket list was a dream come true for another grant recipient. CATS loves being able to share in the joy these recipients have felt as a result of taking these awesome trips.

CATS is able to provide these grants with the help of generous contributions from donors. We have hosted several fundraising events, including silent auctions, with the wine tasting night being my personal favourite in the past. Please check out our website, canadianassistedtravel.ca for information about our upcoming online fundraiser this fall. You can also find out about future events and sponsorship opportunities. CATS relies on volunteers, and we always have volunteer openings available.

Visit our website to find out how to get a free membership to CATS, and how to apply for a travel grant.

CATS wishes you a *bon voyage* to wherever your next adventure may be found!

Canadian Assisted Travel Society

Helping disabled Canadians with their travel needs

What's in a word?

By Taylor Danielson

When I was first was approached to write about language of disability, my gut reaction was: no! It felt so complicated!

I went ahead and wrote a long email, trying to explain why this really wasn't something I would be able to write about. While composing the email, an incident from my childhood sprang to my mind, one which I hadn't thought about since forever. During a camping trip, my family ended up staying next to a man who was paraplegic. The first thing he said to me was: "So, what's wrong with you then?" I told him: "I have a neuromuscular condition called spinal muscular atrophy which causes progressive muscle wasting." I don't remember being offended or alarmed by how he was speaking to me. I did not perceive it as hurtful. Wasn't he just getting to the point?

You know what I realized at that moment, while I was composing the email to politely refuse? I was of course the right person to write about the language of disability. I had already started!

Once I accepted the mission, I decided to take two paths. One path was to examine my own thoughts more careful to get clear on what ***I*** think. The other path involved talking to a few peers to try to find out their thoughts and ideas about language around disability.

It was a confusing discussion I had with myself. Would it be smart to keep the terminology to a small pool? Should I just use a few currently "politically correct" terms? Maybe *diverse ability* and *people with disabilities*? There are many more terms, but possibly it's best to err on the side of simplicity, especially if I don't know the people I am talking with well? Know thy audience! Maybe, I thought to myself, it would be better to just avoid the question altogether and stop exploring what to do, feel and think about all the language out there?

It felt really messy in my head, and I didn't get anywhere. So, I began talking to peers.

Nicole Whitford, Technology for Living's Community Advisor, said: "We should approach each other with an open mind and be respectful regarding how people see themselves. Everyone is different – we need to acknowledge what makes each of us unique and appreciate the value this diversity adds to our community to enrich all our lives." That was a good reminder that our differences are something to be celebrated and positive language can go a long way to make that happen!

Heather Morrison: I want people to refer to me as … hmmm … friendly … generous … kind … disabled … gimpy … thoughtful … a person with a disability … honest? Handicapped is okay but I hate differently abled, special needs, crippled, [those are] UGLY! Not so much the words but more who says them and how it is said. It's like, if someone would pat me on the head, I would have to bite them. But if my man Gerry pats me on the head, it is our joke and I take it with love and it feels like affection. What to call me? When in doubt ask Google! HEY GOOGLE: “How should people refer to me“? And Google said: “Wonderful Heather”! Oh, I like it! I asked again! This time Google answered:“Lovely“! And a third time: ”Heather, my bestie”. Everybody should ask Google, it does wonders for your ego! In the end, I would like people to just call me Heather.

Nicole also told me about a recent controversy in the world of show business. The singer-songwriter Lizzo used the word “spaz” in her latest single. The word “spaz” originates from the word “spastic” and has been used as a derogatory term to describe people with spastic paralysis or cerebral palsy.

Some people think that normalizing or reclaiming terms like this is helpful, but Nicole – as a person with cerebral palsy – believes that can cause tremendous harm.

Lizzo is an influential artist. Nicole is concerned about the negative impact of using words like this might have on young people with conditions that cause spasticity: “Children and youth are still establishing their personalities and finding their sense of self-worth – having an artist that they and their peers may look up to use language like this can be a sharp blow to someone’s self-esteem.” Lizzo has since issued a sincere apology with a promise to immediately rerecord the song without the use of derogatory language. Nicole applauds this decision wholeheartedly.

After talking with Nicole, it became even more obvious to me that there are innumerable, marginalized groups out there who have been being verbally abused by people using cruel language. How to deal with this across all those groups?

Jane Stilwell: My preference is to be called a person with a disability rather than a disabled person. I want to be seen as a person first rather than someone who has a disability. Language is an interesting thing. There are certain words that I do not use to describe myself such as: handicapped, afflicted, suffering and stricken. Those words have never rang true about how I feel about myself. Words like “normal” and “abnormal” also imply negativity. What or who is normal and how is that determined?

I have found that in the last 20 years or so those types of words are used much less often. As persons with disabilities have become more active and visible in the wider community and inclusion has become more prominent in government policies, language is slowly changing. In my opinion, adults have become more perceptive to more suitable language. I believe this is being passed along to younger generations. To me it feels like overall sensitivity to appropriate language in all areas of society is becoming more commonplace.

I briefly looked at some academic research that has been done around language. One thing clearly jumped out at me and reinforced my feeling that the issue of terminology is indeed not an exclusive problem for the disability community.

I found some helpful ideas in a journal article written a while ago by Dr. Joan Blaska, a now retired Professor with the College of Education at St. Cloud State University in Minnesota:

- Language is a reflection of how people in a society see each other.
- There is a long history of marginalisation which continues to this day. Language is used to dehumanize, devalue, and generally mark these groups as “other”.

From my point of view, it has been only recently we’ve seen a more widespread acceptance of the idea that the choice of language we use when referring to the “other” is critical.

Marco Pasqua, inspirational speaker, disability advocate and the MC for the 2022 Simon Cox Student Design Competition Gala Event, has some great advice about this: “Everyone should remember: language is powerful—it can change our perceptions of the world and how we interact with others. Regardless of any labels we assign ourselves (or those that others assign to us) I think it’s important to remember what I call the “Golden

Rule": treat someone the way you wish to be treated and regardless of our abilities, remember people are people, and treat people like people. Our abilities may change over time, but that which makes us all human beings will not."

Yes. Words are powerful tools through which a society perpetuates values — both its proudest achievements and its most debilitating prejudices.

Because language is so intrinsic to human society it suffers from both being treated as "it just is" and "what's the big idea, just spit it out". But it is something that people make and that changes over time – hopefully for the better. There are so many words which I actually find truly reprehensible and have no place in a society I want to live in.

Ultimately, how do I describe myself? My preferred use of language would be the phrase "people with disabilities" and not "disabled people". Some may look at this and say "Well, isn't it the same thing? You just switched the words around". Yes, the words are just rearranged but it has achieved something great! It has become "people first language". Recognize the person first and then acknowledge a disability. The keen-eyed among you may have also recognized that I chose to use the plural "disabilities" to recognize that people can and do have multiple disabilities.

People have the ability (pun intended) to choose the language they use when speaking to each other, and I would ask you all to remember that a small change can radically alter the impact. I do believe that "people with disabilities" is an excellent way to start.

My disability is part of who I am and affects me in manifold ways. And as much as my disability does not define me, I also refuse to let language limit who I am.

Ean Price: As I turn 40, I find myself caring less about what to call myself. I am not able bodied and 'disabled person' doesn't feel as negative to me anymore. I often refer to myself a 'person with a physical disability' or a 'person with limited mobility.' These terms offer more distinctions about a person's abilities. I believe overall I am less sensitive about words used to describe me than other people. What I call myself or how I describe other people also depends on who I am speaking with.

I have never liked the term 'handicapped.' Using the word cripple is of course taboo although I occasionally use it with my close friends of similar abilities. I have heard the term 'diversely abled' and that feels like good one. I have lived all my life in a very accepting, supportive community. That has probably made me an outspoken person who will immediately react when something doesn't work for me. There is one isolated incident I still remember from elementary school. Someone tried to verbally bully me. But I gave back hard: I chewed him out in front of the entire room because I have the power of my voice.

Marnie Essery: "My name is Marnie." That is a good start on how to describe me. I am a person first and yes, one adjective to describe me would be disabled. It is my strong belief that people should be described for their attitude and attributes first and physical condition last. Far too often though, I am labelled and defined as a person who is limited and uses mobility devices. When people meet me for the first time, that is what they notice. They always assume that they should ask my friends, family and caregivers questions that I am perfectly capable and competent to answer. They never get past this to get to know me.

There is so much more to me and my identity than my physical disability. I am a woman with qualities that make me unique from others, even people with the same chronic condition. I have a university education and am articulate and caring. I am adventurous, have a good sense of humour and try to make a difference by helping with causes and non-profit groups and advocating for others.

It is sad that people do not get to know all of me because they believe the myths and misunderstandings of society's 'ableisms.' When I see these behaviours, I am aware that their lack of openness and willingness to understand will create a barrier for further connections and relationships to happen.

The language that people use to describe others can be both positive and negative. It can be detrimental to someone's self esteem and identity. These labels can be life changing, hurtful and restrictive. Many people with disabilities face challenges and barriers to overcome in their life. They do not need to be cut down further by someone who blurts out something thoughtless. Words need to be chosen carefully.

A new chapter is beginning

Moving into Cambie Gardens

By Christine Gordon

George Pearson Centre, located in the south Marpole neighbourhood of Vancouver, opened 70 years ago as a Tuberculosis hospital. As the prevalence of tuberculosis waned and polio epidemics surged in the mid 1950's, the Centre pivoted to house polio survivors many of whom lived in iron lungs. By the mid 1960's, residents living with the effects of polio were joined by people with other disabilities like spinal cord injury, muscular dystrophy and cystic fibrosis who were transferred from care facilities or directly from their homes to institutional care. Institutions used to be considered the best place for people with disabilities to live because the medical model predominated and disability was considered to be a disease that had to be managed by health care professionals. That opinion has changed. The medical model does not reflect the lived experience or the aspirations of people with disabilities and some research shows us that institutions are not necessarily safe places. For example, the pandemic has illustrated that institutions can be hazardous places.

Technology for Living (TFL) has a long history with the residents of George Pearson Centre. Its Technology for Independent Living (TIL) program was involved in the creation of Creekview and Noble House, both early examples of independent living that were havens for Pearson residents who wanted to resettle in the community. The Provincial Respiratory Outreach Program (PROP) was the replacement for the Pearson respiratory outreach program, which was a poorly funded, exclusive program.

> **TFL's pioneer leaders all had their beginning at Pearson including Walt Lawrence, Jeanette Andersen, Mary Williams and Heather Morrison, all Pearson alumni.**

They were instrumental in saving TIL at a very difficult moment in its history and then merging it with the newly created Provincial Respiratory Outreach Program in 2000.

TFL has always kept the faith with Pearson residents, striving whenever possible to assist them to refashion their lives and never forgetting that most people don't chose institutional living – it is chosen for them by a society that is slow to recognize the human rights of people with disabilities.

In keeping with this history, TFL has been collaborating with a number of community partners to create new housing for Pearson residents as part of a phased in closure of the facility. Two years ago, one of TIL's technicians, Benson Au, went to work at Pearson Centre to respond to the urgent need for technology that could ease the brutal isolation of the Covid lockdowns and to act as a bridge for residents who were slated to move into 44 new units in the neighbouring condominium tower, Cambie Gardens.

TIL's work has been invaluable in building trust and identifying how to adapt personal technology to the individual needs of residents. TIL has also provided expert advice to the Health Authority, condominium developer, architects and engineers on how to incorporate SMART technology and environmental controls into the building. The PROP team has created new protocols and is providing training to the service provider as well as making plans to be on the ground in the building when the first residents who need PROP services move in.

TFL's peer support team is echoing the past by assuming responsibility for providing emotional support, information

Heather Morrison enjoying a sunny day in her garden.

Our peer support team visiting Cambie Gardens.

and education to the group of 44 people who will move into the new units this summer. Any change is challenging but moving from an institutional life, where few if any choices are possible, to a more independent life that will involve both more risk and more responsibility is especially difficult. Pearson residents are, by turns, excited and anxious about what their new lives will be. TFL peers understand that and will play a crucial role in helping people to adapt to their new world.

The members of our peer support team Ean Price, Taylor Danielson and Nicole Whitford have been visiting Pearson residents and touring the new units over the last few weeks. They have reported that the new units are awesome in their accessibility, design and quality. All the 44 people who will move out of Pearson in 2022 will become TFL members, some of them may even become leaders in our organization as other Pearson alumni have. Our peer support team is working in concert with TIL technicians and bio-meds and PROP respiratory therapists to provide as much assistance as possible during the period of transition and after.

What will the eventual closure of George Pearson Centre mean for people with disabilities?

It will remove a threat that many people in our community live with on an ongoing basis. Whenever people have not been able to manage in the community the possibility of having to move into Pearson is a great fear. Institutionalization can often be linked to a failure to provide the supports that people need to live in the community. It is an easy out for governments and, often, can be looked at as a violation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to which Canada and British Columbia are signatories.

Over the last 30 years, TFL has always supported people who want to leave George Pearson Centre to do so. We will redouble our efforts in the next few years until everyone who is currently housed there will have been able to leave, and the doors close forever.

Subscribe to our YouTube Channel and never miss another informational video hosted by Wayne Pogue & Ean Price

https://tinyurl.com/m29m48pa

technology for living

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

2022

Thursday, September 15 **6:00-7:00PM**

Join us on Zoom for our 2022 online AGM.

Register in advance for this meeting:
https://tinyurl.com/367pe4ju

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

For any technical support before or during the meeting please contact:

tiltechs@technologyforliving.org
604.326.0175

Special performance by renowned local musician *Jeff Standfield*