

DesignAbility volunteer design helpful devices

Volunteer inventors who love to tinker can take advantage of a new program of Ontario March of Dimes.

DesignAbility links technically-skilled volunteers with people with physical disabilities.

Volunteers work with consumers to create unique gadgets that solve everyday problems encountered in daily living.

Melissa Duguid manages the supportive housing program for Ontario March of Dimes in Oakville and is the local link to DesignAbility. She hears first-hand from volunteers about how

rewarding the experience can be.

"They tell me they enjoy it because it gives them a chance to work one-on-one with consumers, help others, and test their own skills. They love the challenge of each new project."

DesignAbility volunteers have created many items including a portable, adjustable foot rest for a college student, and a customized ramp for a retiree which helps him get into his recliner on his own.

These inventions, and a long list of others that are currently underway, mean improved quality of life for people

with physical disabilities.

Jeannette Shannon, chair of Mississauga's DesignAbility chapter and board member with Ontario March of Dimes, is feels fortunate to be involved.

She remembers the customized desk designed for her when she was a young child laying in a bed in a polio ward back in the 1940s. The hospital brought in a carpenter to create the special device for her that allowed her to continue her reading and school work as well as store her 'treasures.'

"I remember that simple, home-

made desk to this day," says Shannon. "It helped counteract the lack of privacy of the hospital ward and meant I could continue my studies, because someday, I would be going home."

DesignAbility volunteers continue this tradition of caring and service today through chapters in Toronto, Mississauga, Kitchener, and Niagara Falls.

One is being developed in Hamilton and volunteers have begun meeting in several other communities where interest is high.

Individuals who love to plan, design

or build are invited to contact Melissa Duguid in the Hamilton-Oakville area at 845-7412 or Kathy Glasser at 519-579-5530 for more information about joining or creating local DesignAbility chapters throughout the province.

People with disabilities who are looking for unique devices to help them become more independent, can call the same numbers.

Ontario March of Dimes is a multi-service, charitable organization delivering a wide range of programs across the province aimed at enhancing the lives of adults with physical disabilities.

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Stephanie McClellan is peddling her three-wheeled, hand propelled bicycle more than 5,500 kilometres from Vancouver to Ottawa. On Aug. 20th, she will be leading a workshop on disability at St. Cuthbert's Church.

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Disabled cyclist raising awareness of disabilities on 5,500 km. marathon

She's cycling 'On Wings Like Eagles.'

Stephanie McClellan, a candidate for the ministry in the United Church of Canada, is peddling her three-wheeled, hand-propelled bicycle from Vancouver to Ottawa to promote accessibility for people with disabilities.

She's taken the name for her cross-Canada trek from Isaiah 40:31 - "Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles."

McClellan, 26, will be in Oakville at St. Cuthbert's Anglican Church, 1541 Oakhill Dr., on Aug. 20th from 7 to 9 p.m., for an interactive workshop on disabilities and abilities. The workshop will be similar to others being offered across Canada. She hopes to offer a workshop each night.

Having become suddenly disabled due to severe illness, McClellan, a devout Christian, feels the church has and continues to be "my lifeline." She says the Bible verse which inspired the name of her tour gives her "personal encouragement."

McClellan plans to travel 50 to 100 kilometres a day, depending on weather and terrain. She began her trip on May 30th, leaving from Vancouver, and hopes to reach Ottawa by the end of the month, covering a distance of over 5,500 kilometres. Yesterday, she was in Parry Sound.

Raised in the Niagara area, she graduated from E. L. Crossley Secondary School in Fonthill as an Ontario Scholar and enrolled at the University of Guelph to study towards an education degree which would qualify her to teach physical education to the deaf.

However, six years ago, at age 19, her life changed dramatically. During her first year in university, she developed sudden adult onset rheumatoid arthritis and fibromyalgia.

Within a week, she went from being an able-bodied athlete to physically disabled requiring assistance in every aspect of daily life.

The disease went undiagnosed for seven weeks. Once the diagnoses was made, she spent five months at the Chedoke-McMaster Hospital's Rheumatic Disease Unit relearning basic life skills such as dressing, tying her shoes and walking.

McClellan returned to the University of Guelph and completed her Bachelor of Arts degree in 1996, and became involved with wheelchair sports - particularly basketball - and its Centre for Students with Disabilities. She was awarded the Gilmore Award for her contribution to campus life.

She has played in an international tournaments for two years with the Twin City Spinners in Kitchener and is currently a member of the Division 2 Provincial Women's Wheelchair Basketball Team in British Columbia, having moved to Vancouver shortly after her graduation from Guelph. In 1997 she carried the Canadian flag for the opening ceremonies at the World Wheelchair Games in England.

She is currently attending Regent College in Vancouver, studying towards her Masters of Divinity.

McClellan is travelling with a five-person support team, two people driving ahead to confirm arrangements and three in the support van behind her.

For more information, and updates of the trip, check the On Wings Like Eagles web site at: www.pz.com/on-eagles-wings

For information about the workshop at St. Cuthbert's Church, call 844-6200.

COPA hosts Young Eagles Days

The Canadian Owners and Pilots Association (COPA) Flight 28 Inc., is participating in the Young Eagles Program. This program, which was established in 1992, gives young people between the ages of eight and 17 an opportunity to experience a flight in a small aircraft, that would help to generate an interest in aviation either for recreation or a career.

COPA Flight 28's Young Eagles Days will be held Aug. 21st and Oct. 30th. All flights will take place from Burlington Airpark on Bell School Line, Burlington.

Persons interested in participating in the Young Eagles Program should contact J.E. Slavik at 829-0237.