

The Link

CONNECTRA
CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Spring 2011

Abilities Expo 2011

ConnectTra's multi-agency resource fair will bring people with disabilities face to face with Metro Vancouver service providers.

Join us at 12:30pm on **Tuesday, April 19** at the **Roundhouse Community Centre** (across from the accessible Yaletown-Roundhouse SkyTrain station) for an afternoon of information sharing and entertainment.

Last year's Abilities Expo was attended by more than 130 people with disabilities, and this year's promises to be even bigger.

The main stage will feature presentations on accessible travel, health and wellness, advocacy, assistive technology and live music, while 30 organizations will host displays of the services they provide for the community.

The event offers something for everyone, and is not to be missed.



Bright light: Tetra volunteer Brian Johnson checking the lights on Eric Molendyk's powerchair.

Be safe, be seen, be brilliant!

A Tetra Society project could increase road safety for every man, woman and child using a wheelchair.

The "**TetraLites**" project tackles a particular vulnerability faced by any wheelchair user: Being lower than other pedestrians, motorists tend not to notice wheelchairs at intersections.

The design features three rows of 15 LED lights, mounted in Plexiglas tubes, which attach to the sides and rear of a wheelchair. The brilliant idea came from Tetra volunteer **Brian Johnson** following a conversation with 31-year-old **Eric Molendyk**, of Burnaby, who was struck by a car on his way to work one morning in 2008 because the driver, as she later told him, just didn't see him crossing the road.

"I was wearing a poncho with a yellow reflective strip across the chest and had reflective panels on my chair," he said. "The problem is drivers are trying to use the crossing to make their turn. They are watching the oncoming traffic more than the crossing."

Johnson said the lights can be attached to the sides of a wheelchair or in the form of a vertical flagpole, and can produce the whole colour spectrum. "I've not spoken to a wheelchair user who doesn't want them."

Molendyk added: "I think everyone should have these lights on their chair. If it makes a motorist slow down for just one second, they can save a life."

More on Tetra: www.tetrasociety.org

ConnectTra info:

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Discussion: ConneTra member Linda McGowan, centre.



Supports: Paul Gauthier tells how jobseeker's funding is available.

Money for equipment to help jobseekers

A new program is making money available for people with disabilities aiming to land employment, ConneTra members heard at the group's February workshop.

Paul Gauthier, of BC Personal Supports Network, detailed the \$20 million Equipment and Assistive Technology Initiative (EATI) program.

He said the program made money available for assistive technology for anyone with a disability who has employment-related goals, or goals leading to employment. To qualify, you must be unemployed or wanting to upgrade work-related skills.

"We're talking about participation that might be as simple as going to the grocery store, or as grand as going to the Olympics," he said.

"The federal government has made \$20 million available to provincial government to have assistive technology available for people interested in getting into the labour market.

"It's about supplying the necessary equipment so people can participate and start to go through to employment. We've been hearing needs for screen readers, van conversions, electronic door openers,

speech recognition software, or an electric wheelchair."

People must self-identify as having a disability, he said – EATI does not need a doctor's referral. Nor does the program concern itself with people's income, savings or tax returns. People earning less than \$500 per month qualify, but not anyone eligible for EI.

Requests take from three weeks to two-and-a-half months, and the program ensures training is given to operate new assistive devices, added Gauthier. For more info visit: www.bcits.org.

Hot, healthy food delivered right to your door

Meals on Wheels bring hot and healthy food to the homes of people that cannot otherwise cook for themselves.

The **Health & Home Care Society of BC** – formerly the Victorian Order of Nurses – has been making these year-round deliveries for the past 42 years, and currently feeds more than 500 "isolated" elderly and disabled people, said volunteer manager **Jill Howey**.

"We deliver wherever people order it – you don't have to be referred by a doctor or case manager," she explained.

"Not all of our clients are seniors. We have moms with post-partum depression and people with mental health problems, or people with brain injuries who find it difficult to plan and organize their food. There are individuals with chronic medical conditions or recovering from illness, injury or surgery"

It costs \$4 to \$5 per meal, payable at the end of the month. Hot meals are delivered Monday to Friday, and clients heat their own food at weekends.

Info: www.carebc.ca, or phone 604-732-7638.

