

The Link

CONNECTRA
CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Fall 2009

Websites now more accessible

The ConneTra Society, along with other societies that make up the Sam Sullivan Disability Foundation, has added a new dimension to its online presence.

Links on the societies homepages now offer information about the Disability Foundation in traditional and simplified Chinese characters.

According to the 2006 census, 29.4 per cent of Metro Vancouver's 2,116,581 population is ethnically Chinese. It is not known what percentage of *this* figure comprises of people with disabilities, but it is safe to assume that it is a substantial number – and many do not speak English as a first language.

“We are very excited to be launching our new Chinese language web pages, which will broaden our reach and help ensure that our programs are open to all residents of Vancouver and the Lower Mainland,” explained ConneTra’s executive director Duane Geddes.



Bursary award: Taewon Kook, seen here at a previous ConneTra meeting.

ConneTra’s Taewon lands a \$1,000 back-to-college bursary

ConneTra member Taewon Kook was awarded a bursary towards his college education.

The Cerebral Palsy Association of BC awarded him their Tanabe bursary, which makes \$1,000 to “any eligible student 18 years and older, with CP, that is planning to attend an institute of higher learning in the following year.”

Taewon, aged 23, is currently studying for an Arts Degree at Douglas College, including sociology and anthropology. His long-term plan is to continue studies at Simon Fraser University (SFU), although he will seek employment for a while before then.

“I was very pleased to receive the bursary,” he said. “I never expected it. I’ll use the money for tuition fees.”

“I like humanities, and I’m finding it very interesting. I’ll probably have to study a bit harder at SFU, but for now I’m enjoying it.”

“When I get enough credits I’ll transfer to SFU. I’ll take a break before I start. I’ll take an employment training program and get a job, to gain some experience in the workplace.”

Taewon has been a ConneTra member since April 2008, “to make personal connections,” and has been a constant and popular presence at meetings ever since.



Presentation: Brian Bell talks about accessible outdoors adventures.



Backwoods bound: Travelling by TrailRider.

Opportunities for backwoods adventure highlighted for ConneCTra audience

The founder of a program offering leisure opportunities to people with disabilities gave a presentation at the June ConneCTra meeting.

Brian Bell spoke about the **Interfit** programs he runs in the stunning scenery of the North Shore mountains. This includes an ever-growing range of options, including hiking, kayaking, skiing, gym-based fitness programs as well as outfitting people for their own backwoods adventures.

Most people know of **Interfit** – the **Integrated Fitness Society** through the hiking program, which offers the use of two quite different wilderness access wheelchairs. This includes **Interfit's** own Off-Road Chair, affectionately known as the Orc, and the British Columbia Mobility Opportunity Society's (BCMOS) TrailRider.

With 35 core volunteers and two Orcs and two TrailRiders, **Interfit** will have arranged 32 hikes this summer hiking season. Destinations included Lyn Headwaters, Mosquito Creek, the Pacific Trail and Cypress Mountain.

“People choose to use a TrailRider or Off-Road Chair depending on personal needs and wants,” said Bell. “Between them they cover a lot of bases. Really, it all boils down to individual preference.”

“We offer an opportunity for adventure, a chance to get out into the woods and onto the trails.”

Bell, a C5 quadriplegic, says that he runs **Interfit** to offer opportunities for outdoor adventures to people that would otherwise not get the chance.

“I love the outdoors, and know there's lots of other people out there that also love the outdoors, but might not have the resources.”

He first became involved in providing such opportunities through provision of accessible fitness equipment in rec. centres. “When I got out of G.F. Strong Rehab Centre, there was no accessible gym equipment on the North Shore. However, I found William Griffin Rec. Centre very accommodating.”

Bell prides himself on working with, rather than competing against, other service providers. His kayaking and skiing programs basically direct clients towards existing operations, although he intends to offer these directly through **Interfit** next year “to pick up the slack where people are being left out.”

He worked closely with BCMOS in the creation of his own off-road access wheelchair, explaining that the Orc actually came out of 2005 sessions with Sam Sullivan to update the TrailRider – which resulted in the lighter, more comfortable Black Diamond model.

“Our group surmised that two wheels were better than one for what we wanted to achieve, while Sam said he wanted the TrailRider to continue with the one wheel. We agreed to go different ways.”

“The way I see it is there's more than one type of mountain bike.”

For more info about **Interfit** visit www.interfit.ca; For BCMOS, see www.bcmos.org.