

The Link

CONNECTRA
CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Winter 2009 - 2010

De-clutter your life

Connectra member Lorie Tran will be talking about her business venture at the group's **December 16** workshop.

Lori has joined forces with professional organizer Lynne Davidson to offer a service called SuiteHarmony to enable people with disabilities to best arrange their living spaces.

Davidson has been building her own organizing business, My Serene Space, for the past two years "in response to many people's growing need to simplify their lives, create more time for leisure, and reduce the stress of their home and work environments."

Davidson explained that a room full of "stuff and clutter" seems to take away energy. "It makes you feel tired and depressed.

"De-cluttering creates space for other things your life. You are living a more whole life."

She worked with Tran last year, helping organize her home, and has been thinking about specific needs of people with disabilities.

"This is not about tidying up, it's storage solutions," she continued. Custom furniture and shelving is easier to reach from a wheelchair – but a multitude of caregivers also need to be organized.

"Different groups of people are all taking things out, and putting them back in different spots. You need to arrange things so that it doesn't matter who comes in – everything goes back to the same spot."

See workshop details below.



Connectra members celebrated the group's tenth birthday at its October workshop. Tetra Society National Program Coordinator Pat Tweedie lent a hand cutting the cake (seen above, with Connectra board member Nellie Wong in the background).

Celebrate Christmas at our upcoming workshop



The next Connectra workshop – *Christmas with Connectra* – will be held on **Wednesday, Dec 16**.

Join us from 1 – 3 pm at meeting room B of Vancouver's Roundhouse Community Centre (located at Davie & Pacific). There is a fully accessible SkyTrain station, Yaletown-Roundhouse, across the road.

Guest Speaker Anna Parisi, Canadian Paralympic Committee's Communication Chief, will be reviewing Paralympic options: talking about what sports can be seen at

which venues. There will also be presentations from Lorie Tran and Lynne Davidson of SuiteHarmony (see story above) and Parking Mobility. A light meal is included.

Links and additional information about the workshop are available on the Connectra website: www.connectra.org.

Anyone who wants to attend should reserve a place with Connectra program coordinator Steve Street: 604-688-6464 ext. 115, or ssstreet@disabilityfoundation.org.

Connectra info:

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In the news: Cody Tresierra demonstrates mouth painting.



Olympic torch: Bruce Gilmour shows his Olympic torch.

Celebrating talents of people with disabilities

People from all walks of life came together to celebrate the sporting, artistic and cultural achievements of people with disabilities.

Hosted by the City of Vancouver at the Roundhouse, the event marked the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, on December 3. Hundreds participated over the course of the day.

It featured presentations by Beijing Paralympic torchbearer Bruce Gilmour, mouth-painter Cody Tresierra, the Wheelchair Dance Academy, Deaflympics judo silver medalist Marco Chiaramonte, BC Blind Sports (Goalball), wheelchair basketball, Max Fomitchev (mime), a variety of musicians (including sylvia macCormac and Rolf Kempf of VAMS) and service provider's displays.

Opening the event, Monica Kay, the City's Equal Employment Opportunity Program Director, said the varied achievements of people with disabilities "brings us together and makes us stronger. They make us healthier and contribute to our enjoyment of life in many ways."

Paralympic swimmer Carla Qualtrough, president of the Canadian Paralympic Committee, said the upcoming 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games marked the "first time in the Games history" that the Paralympics had shared the billing. "The Paralympics are catalysts for social change. I believe the lives of Canadians with disabilities will be better off as a result of that event."

Bruce Gilmour, blind since an auto accident aged 20, spoke of his experience in the 2008 Beijing Paralympic opening ceremony. The former Paralympic runner was among 10 chosen to represent Vancouver at the final stage of the 13,181 km torch relay – as much as anything for promoting the capabilities of people with disabilities.

"It was the most magical moment in my life," he said, recalling holding the Olympic torch. "I spent 10 fabulous days with people that welcomed me as if I was a brother."

He presented his Paralympic torch to groups of Grade 3 children from Elsie Roy Elementary School – "If you touch this you will touch the magic" – later saying that the gas canister had been removed so the flame could not be used for anything other than Paralympic purposes.

Mouth painter Cody Tresierra gave a demonstration of his art. He said he had been painting this way 20 years.

"If I try to make a painting that looks like a photograph, it would take a couple of weeks," he said. "But mostly I prefer to be more impressionistic. It's more enjoyable. I can make the colours more rich."

A display by Wheelchair Dance Academy showed some graceful moves by integrated groups of able bodied and disabled dancers. Artistic director Toni Triplett, artistic director of the Triplett School of Ballroom Dance, said the group has been running two years and now boasts 20 participating wheelchair dancers.

"The program is for people that want a creative outlet," she explained. "People that have danced or always wanted to."

The day concluded with a wide mix of music, mime and further demonstrations, to conclude on a positive note. For more info about the event: www.vancouverdisabilityday.ca.



Wheelchair Dance Academy.

More: Steve Street at 604-688-6464 ext. 115, or ssstreet@disabilityfoundation.org