

The Link

CONNECTRA
CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

February 2008

Makeover for ConneCTra

The BC government has signed a three-year deal with ConneCTra that will see the non-profit focusing on what it does best – empowering people to be more active.

The Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance wants job seekers to deal with one of three service providers – Theo BC, Triumph Vocational Services and Neil Squire Society – depending on where they live and the nature of their disability.

ConneCTra will no longer run job search services, being instead directed to expand outreach work among people with disabilities that are looking to increase their social activities. This includes: workshops and presentations covering recreational, employment and lifestyle issues; offering one-on-one recreation planning sessions; and becoming a clearinghouse for information about available options.

ConneCTra will serve as a connecting agency, linking people with disabilities to activities and programs that will, over time, allow them to grow, gain confidence and become increasingly involved in community life, explained executive director Duane Geddes.

“Our job is to get all people with significant disabilities living in the Lower Mainland as socially active and involved as possible.”

“We will be encouraging people to be constantly seeking ways to increase their level of activity. We are not saying that everyone has to be a sailor or a hiker, just that everyone has the capacity to be more active than they are. We can all do more with our lives, and that includes me.”



Ballroom Blitz: Wheelchair dancer Leah Tenenbein.

Entertainment, information and ‘adventure therapy’ at show

A ConneCTra reception in early February will feature a variety of lifestyle issues, ranging from everyday adaptive devices to “adventure therapy.”

The Feb. 7 event will feature a variety of subjects of interest to people with significant disabilities. Organizers want to make the event reflect the reality of members’ lives: music, art and other leisure pursuits are important building blocks of anyone’s sense of well-being.

“We are mixing a number of recreational and creative opportunities and support for our clients at this reception, in keeping with our new mandate to keep our members as socially active and involved as possible,” explained ConneCTra programs administrator Stephen Street.

The theme holding it all together is accessibility. Central to the event will be
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Sounds like a good idea – ‘adapted’ artists cut CD

Vancouver Adapted Music Society (VAMS) launches a showcase CD on Feb. 21 to highlight the area’s finest musicians with disabilities.

The 15-track CD, *Strait Goods*, shows that disability is no barrier to talent, states VAMS manager Kirk Duncan. It covers a wide musical territory, from the silky jazz of Joe Coughlin and Jayne Dinsmore to up-tempo pop courtesy of Mark Audio Ash and Bobbi Style.

“I do not think I would be on stage singing if it wasn’t for VAMS,” said Dinsmore.



VAMS artist: Jayne Dinsmore.

Strait Goods can be bought for \$25 from the VAMS website, www.vams.org, which also features sound clips and performers’ biographies.

Assistive devices, music, dance and art – from Page 1

a presentation from the Tetra Society of North America, a sister non-profit to ConneCTra, which provides custom adaptive devices. Its volunteer engineers come up with solutions to day-to-day mobility and access issues.

A second guest speaker will detail Power to Be Adventure Therapy, a BC-based non-profit that provides outdoor recreation programs for disadvantaged and disabled children and adults. Founder and executive director Tim Cormode said the group aims to “inspire everyone to reach their full potential, and eventually, a promising future.”

In addition, dance teacher Toni Triplett, artistic director of the Triplett School of Ballroom Dance, will be there to talk about her new project, the tentatively entitled Canadian Wheelchair Dance Academy. It involves instructing wheelchair users to dance in tandem with an able-bodied partner.

“I’m passionate about dancing, and I want to share it with everyone,” she said.

There will be live music from Vancouver Adapted Music Society recording artist Jayne Dinsmore (pictured above), an accomplished jazz performer.

Also on show will be information from the Jewish Family Support Services’ Canes Enables program – artist-created, highly individual canes – and the work of artists and ConneCTra members Art Jonker, Cody Tresierra and Shara Gutsche, all of who have disabilities. Photographer/videographer Leslie-Ann Miele, who covered the 2006 Mobility Cup, will be displaying her work.

The reception runs from 2:30pm to 4:30pm on Thursday, Feb. 7 at Roundhouse Community Centre (181 Roundhouse Mews, Vancouver – at the corner of Davie & Pacific). There is pay parking at the venue.

Info: Steve Street, 604-688-6464 ext. 115.

Community events

Martial arts & self-defence: a program for people with mobility disabilities, is run by BC Paraplegic Association (BCPA). Classes start Saturday, Feb. 9, and are run by a Vancouver Hapkido and Taekwondo master, Michael Sirota. Cost is \$64 (financial assistance available). Info Vivian Garcia at 604-326-1237.

Sports sampler: BC Wheelchair Sports Association is showcasing adaptive basketball, rugby, athletics and tennis at Richmond Secondary School (7171 Minoru Blvd.) 11am – 3pm on Saturday, Feb. 9. Register: Jackie@bcwheelchairsports.com or 604-737-3191

Picture perfect: BCPA is hosting a photo contest to illustrate the lives of people with disabilities. Submissions must be from or else feature someone with a mobility impairment. Deadline is March 31. Info: photocontest@bcpara.org or phone 1-877-324-3611.

Fifty-plus events: Contact Terry Leblanc at 604-875-1444 or Dave Symington (604-250-2067) for info.

CONNECTRA

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