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posAbilities
Empowering people with developmental disabilities



Stage Door presents: Zulius and the Fire Snake

Written by Frank Davalos

In my second week as the new Communications Assistant at *posAbilities*, I had the good fortune to join the Stage Door Troupe for an entire morning. During my visit, I got to meet all the amazing people involved in the upcoming play *Zulius and the Fire Snake*, including cast and crew members! Might I say, the hugs and kisses I received during my first morning at Stage Door may have one upped the warm welcome I received at *posAbilities* head office on my first day (let's just call it a tie). It is a truly amazing thing when one can leave his or her job feeling so rewarded and fulfilled. For my first gallivant with *posAbilities*, that is exactly how I felt when I left Stage Door.

Following rehearsal, I had an in-depth conversation with the troupe's director, **Don House**. I asked him to describe his cast in ten words or less. With a trembling

voice, House began... "Dedicated, awesome, loving, teamwork, inspiration, character" and more. Afterwards, we started to discuss the different dynamics involved in creating a production from the ground up.

"There is kind of a double-edged sword when you are doing these kinds of productions. Do we have an obligation to teach society about our crew's disabilities, or should we just create something to showcase their abilities? We've kind of all decided to just let them shine... in whatever way that might be."

From there, we moved into talking about the upcoming production, *Zulius and the Fire Snake*. "Every year our crew is getting better and better" explains House, "They all understand that this isn't just another day program, and that they are actors, and this is a company, and we're expected to work."

Zulius and the Fire Snake tells the story of Zulius, a young man facing a marriage arranged by his evil mother (to a less than attractive mountain girl), so that he may succeed his father and become Pharaoh. However, Zulius has no interest in getting married and being Pharaoh, instead, he wants to be a snake charmer.

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Do you have a story for our quarterly newsletter or web-site?

Contact Frank Davalos • T (604) 299-4001 • E fdavalos@posabilities.ca

www.posAbilities.ca



Zulius and the Fire Snake

Continued from Cover Page

In the midst of this debacle, Zulius meets a mysterious stranger and hatches a plan to foil his Mother's idea. But the evil Queen has tricks of her own, and she curses Zulius' one true love! Will Zulius set out on a quest to find something that will save her? Will the mountain girl find a good orthodontist? Will any of them, survive the Death Mummy? The only way to find out is to join Stage Door in June, and see for yourself!

Zulius and the Fire Snake runs from June 5-7, to June 12-14, beginning at 7:00 pm each night. The theatre is located at 3102 Main Street in Vancouver, and you can purchase tickets to this Egyptian comedy for just ten dollars. So make like Nike and "just do it" - get your ticket today because it's going to be a one-of-a-kind experience!

ECONOMIC INCLUSION



posAbilities Launches its Second Employment Service

Written by Frank Davalos

On June 25, *posAbilities* will officially launch its second employment service, expanding its services from New Westminister, to the greater Vancouver area. I sat down with the Team Manager of the Employment Services **Kalena Kavanaugh** to discuss her excitement about the new service.

"I think it fits in with our mandate at *posAbilities* to provide employment services for individuals that want to be employed. We have the service in New West and have had many successes there. It was important to us to provide the same services for our persons served in Vancouver," Kalena told me. "Vancouver was really just a natural expansion that made sense."

Although the service doesn't officially begin until the 25th of June, it has not stopped the employment specialists from connecting with Vancouver Life Skills (VLS) to get a head start. "VLS has been instrumental in helping us meet and explain our services to the people that they have been supporting," explained Kalena. During our discussion about the challenges involved in launching an employment service at a new location, Kalena told me that it wasn't much different than riding a bike. "I have opened up new services twice before, and to be honest, it gets easier each time."

When asked about the importance of the employment services program to the mandate of *posAbilities* as a whole, Kalena shared what she called 'her own personal philosophy': "We all want to have some purpose in our life, and work gives us that purpose. We work, and we earn money that we are able to spend on other things that we like doing."



The PES team congratulates Jack D'Arcy from Ansatel Communications Inc. – winner of the posAbilities Employment Service prize basket offered at the Burnaby Board of Trade's Business Day Tradeshow!

Perhaps my favorite part of our conversation was when she explained why she puts up with the drive from Langley to New Westminister (and now Vancouver) every single morning.

"I am a part of an organization in a community that clearly cares about making a difference in a person's life. When we talk about the stories of our persons served and we see the difference of their quality of life and the choices that they get to make, it's wonderful. You can practically see their self-esteem growing. To just sit back and watch somebody have their whole life change because of employment, how can you not want to do this job?"

COMMUNITY BUILDING

Can You Dig It and Bethany Newton United Church build a community garden in one day!

Written by Frank Davalos & Monique Nelson

On May 26, 2012, the *posAbilities Can You Dig It* initiative partnered up with **Telus**, and the **Bethany Newton United Church** to build a community garden in just one day! This is the third such event, adding to the 25 plus gardens developed by CYDI around the lower mainland. This day was a tremendous success, and the beautiful weather couldn't have complimented it better! By 4:00 pm the group had succeeded in building 39 plots.

The momentum generated by one day builds creates many ripple effects in the community. In the days immediately following the build, developers adjacent to the site trenched the section needed for water lines, and Church members who weren't quite sure about the possibility of achieving this garden so quickly, began to approach the organizers to share their delight in what was created. As part of the initiative, a portion of the produce harvested from the garden will go directly to the Church's food bank, with any surplus donated to others.

Rev. John Miller explained how this initiative could not have been possible without the contributions from those surrounding the community. "**Jagdeep** from the **Maskeen Group**, who is the contractor building the Lumina Living project right beside us, has been a huge help in allowing this whole thing to take place. And the guys from **Fairborne Homes** who are building the Sequoia project behind the church have graciously donated the soil for our community garden!"

Aside from the newly established local partners, **Aegis Wests' Simone Brandl** connected the CYDI team with **Telus** through its Day of Giving initiative. On the last Saturday of every May, Telus brings together team members, retirees, family and friends nationwide to make a positive impact in the community. Last May, the collective volunteer effort brought together 11,400 volunteers at 300 activities across Canada. This year, a team of 30 very hard working "green shirt" volunteers associated with Telus' Burnaby office, leant helping hands in Newton. They were instrumental in making this community garden a success!

A special thanks to everyone at **posAbilities** who supported the event: the Aegis West team for preparing the food, Adora Bartolone and her daughter, Louise Blackwell, Paul Colvin and the DSIS team: Steve Cutler, Greg and Chad, Sherrie Crane and her friend Andrea, Frank Davalos, Chris Doerksen,

Gerry Fremming, Monique Nelson, Gord Tulloch and the cheer squad Hemant Kulkarni, Amy Glass and their families. Sigit Murdawa and his partner Cinthia Pagé deserve extra special recognition, as without their dedication and expertise, there would be no garden at Bethany Newton United Church.

During the final words at the garden ceremony, Cinthia explained to the dozens of volunteers how important their contribution was to making this initiative work. "Can You Dig It is just an idea, but it lives because of all of you... You guys rock!" To end the day, an apple tree donated by *posAbilities* was planted to commemorate the fruitful event.



The Hon. Stephanie Cadieux, MLA Surrey - Panorama popped by to cheer us on.



PROGRAM NEWS BEAT

Biggest Mover Challenge

Contributed by Amanda Anderson

Congratulations to all the participants and staff at Aegis West Day Program for successfully completing the 12 week New West Minister Biggest Mover Challenge 2012 that was held by the city of New Westminster Parks Culture and Recreation which began on February 5th and ended on April 28th, 2012.

Being a part of this exercise challenge definitely was an amazing and fun experience for everyone involved. We all came together as a team and encouraged one another to get moving and to be more active in our daily lives. Right from the start everyone involved was dedicated and motivated to complete this challenge to the best of their ability.

Monday to Friday we would begin our day with exercise such as aerobic/stretching classes, yoga, outdoor soccer, dancing and outdoor walks. Our program purchased yoga mats for the entire Aegis West Team and once a week we would choose healthy snacks to have after our exercise. Some of the participants were even able to attend a nutritional tour held at Thrifty Foods – this helped reinforce healthy eating choices! Another incentive for our exercise program was whoever accumulated the most exercise points per week would receive a free lunch from the Aegis West Catering Program!

Since beginning the challenge, noticeable benefits have been weight loss, increased energy levels and a more positive attitude. Also everyone continues to be enthusiastic about participating in our daily exercise; they arrive ready and requesting to start their day with physical activity.

This challenge definitely gave Aegis West a kick start into incorporating physical activity into our daily schedule and making exercise a priority. Many participants that were not interested in exercising prior to the "Biggest Mover Challenge" are now eager and willing to participate in daily exercise. It's been great to see some of our participants taking the initiative in helping guide the exercise moves when we are having our exercise class and to see their confidence level improve by doing so.

We organized a very successful BBQ Sports Day which everyone loved, and we are in the process of planning another similar event for June. We also had the opportunity to take part in the 5km Mental Health Walk at Deer Lake Park on May 9th which was also a huge success. Most of the participants walked the entire 5 kms – which was not something they could have finished 3 months ago. This entire experience has inspired Aegis West to commit to staying active and continuing our journey in living a healthier lifestyle.

All programs are welcome to join us in our morning exercise, please contact **Amanda** or **Simone** at Aegis for more information. Stay Healthy!



Norwegian Day at New Transitions

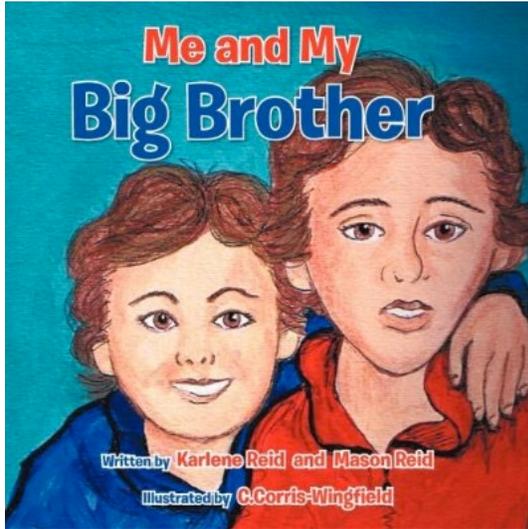
Contributed by Amanda Wright

On March 21st, New Transitions hosted a celebration of the Norwegian Culture. We learned how to sing songs in Norwegian and we watched a video about the Viking ships. Guests enjoyed some cookies, tarts and traditional meatballs! I had to do a lot of convincing to encourage guests to step into my Viking photo booth. They seemed to be a little shy at first. In the end I got lots of pictures of guests dressed like a Viking. We want to give a special thank you to **Leslie Anne Eriksson** and her family for sharing and teaching us about their culture.



Mother and Son Co-Author Book to Support Sibs

Written and published by **Karlene Reid** and **Mason Reid**



This book begins with a dedication, “For my Carter and for my Mason. Love, Mom.” These few words express beautifully the reason why **Karlene Reid** decided to write and publish her first book. Karlene was searching for a tool that could help her support her 9 and 7 year old sons in developing their relationship with each other. Her eldest son **Carter** has autism, while her younger son **Mason**, was struggling with the differences he was experiencing as his sibling. Mason wondered why his brother wouldn’t play with him, like the other kids’ siblings did, and wished Carter could talk. He was feeling a wide array of emotions and was beginning to drift away from Carter as a friend. At that point, Karlene began searching for a story book that she could read with Mason to help him make sense of his unique childhood experience, one that would provide him with some support. When she couldn’t find what she was looking for, she decided to write the book about the story she needed to tell. As an added bonus, writing it with Mason would show him that she was really listening and would give him a way to express himself. Publishing the book could help other families too, and it would be a reminder of what the boys share throughout their life. This story book talks about love, friendship, sameness and difference. It touches the heart and is beautifully illustrated by **C. Corris-Wingfield**. Special thanks to **Robyn McElveen** of Laurel Behaviour Support Services for letting our community know that Karlene and Mason have co-authored their first book.

Me and My Big Brother was published through Author House and can be purchased online at www.Amazon.ca.

Laurel Team Heads for the Sunshine Coast to offer Workshop on Challenging Behaviours

Contributed by **Kavita Kamat** and **Leilani Llacuna** for Laurel Behaviour Support Services



Leilani Llacuna



Kavita Kamat

Leilani Llacuna and **Kavita Kamat**, Behavior Consultants from *posAbilities*’ Laurel Behavior Support Services (LBSS) recently provided a two day interactive workshop on “Addressing Challenging Behaviors with Children and Youth

with Special Needs” at the Sunshine Coast. The workshop was held at the Gibsons Community centre and was attended by parents, foster parents and professionals and was sponsored by the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD).

It was a wonderful experience for both Kavita and Leilani. The room was filled with enthusiasm as people shared and learned information together. Participants consistently linked their observation of their child/a child they support with information they received during the workshop and it really enriched the learning experience of the group. Several participants shared that there are limited resources and support available to families in the region and workshop presented a wonderful opportunity for the families to learn and network with each other.

Training opportunities like this workshop ties into *posAbilities* strategic plan in terms of using employee resources and knowledge to strengthen and expand its behaviour support services. Plans are underway to expand this type of workshop in other regions, and MCFD staff have proposed that LBSS consultants offer a series of workshops like these every year on a variety of different topics. It was a wonderful opportunity to connect our services with community members and professionals in the area.

CONTACT US FOR A FREE ESTIMATE

Phone: 604-872-4001

www.DontSweatItServices.com

SHARING OUR DREAMS



'include Me!' Project links service delivery to Quality of Life

Community Living British Columbia (CLBC) has been touring the province and asking individuals to fill out a survey called **My Life** as part of the 'include Me!' project. CLBC initiated the project because it wanted to ensure that the individuals who access its funded services have a say in how these services are provided. It is essential to fulfilling the mission of living good lives in welcoming communities.

The My Life survey, addresses the internationally validated framework developed by **Dr. Robert Schalock** and consists of 50 questions based on three categories: independence, social participation, and well-being. The survey has proven to be an effective tool in measuring quality of life for all people (disability, or no-disability), and has been tested across cultures and over time.

A random sample of persons served by *posAbilities* will be selected and asked to participate in the survey beginning this summer. At the end of the survey period, participating agencies will receive a report of the findings. The report will provide us with new information to fold into our continuing quality improvement process. We will also be able to learn from other service providers, share best practices and overall, raise the bar of service quality across the sector. It's an exciting initiative, and *posAbilities* is pleased to be taking part!

For more information on include Me! and the quality of life survey, you can visit www.communitylivingbc.ca/include-me

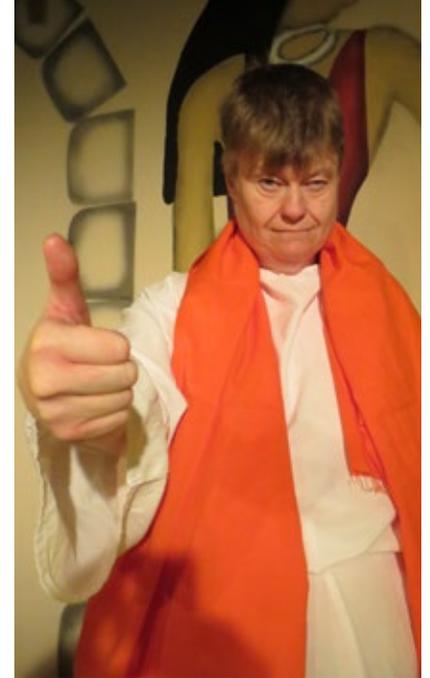
Adam's Future Is Bright

Last Spring, **Adam Sturhahn** participated in a storytelling workshop developed to support self advocates in using 'story power' to express themselves in a clear and compelling way. Following that experience, Adam contacted the editor of *Imagine!* to inform others about the challenges of living with Prader Willi Syndrome (PWS), and his desire to assist others by raising funds for research. At that time, Adam also shared his dreams for the future. This year, communications assistant Frank Davalos follows up on Adam's story to learn more.

Since February, Adam has been preparing for his part in Stage Door's current production, *Zulius and the Fire Snake*, an Egyptian comedy in which he plays the role of "the Healer." Outside of the theatre, he has been making big changes in his life. Adam recently moved into a new, more independent living arrangement, something that he says he's always dreamed of. "It has finally come true. I am in my own apartment with two guys who are supporting me, and it's going great!"

Just a couple years ago Adam was going through one of the hardest times of his life due to the challenges of living with Prader Willi Syndrome and sleep apnea. Acknowledging the support of family, friends, staff and God; Adam shared his achievements, including reaching a healthier body weight, sleeping less, and now living in a much more independent arrangement! When asked what his favorite part about living in his new home is, Adam said, "nobody tells me what to do, I make all of my own decisions, it gives me more freedom, and I just love it so much!" At times when issues do arise amongst the roommates, they problem solve together and decide what to do.

Adam is also making progress towards one of his other dreams, which is to find a job. "Maybe one day I can get my business going, I have already started preparing notes but that's all so far" he says. For what business you ask? Adam wants to be a pet advisor, advising pet owners on how to properly look after their animals. In addition, he said that he still wants to be a self-advocate for PWS. "I want to educate parents about the signs and symptoms for PWS, so that they can help their children so that they don't get into trouble in the future," he explained. "Living with PWS can be terrible, but I am much better at living with it now that I know more about it." We look forward to catching up with Adam again the future, as he is sure to provide us with another inspiring story!



Reading Corner...



Did you know that *posAbilities* has once again achieved 3 year Accreditation through CARF? To learn more about the outcome of the survey, please read the report on our web-site - "Publications" section, or contact us. The CARF Survey Report and response to the uSPEQ™ Employee Climate Survey can also be found on our intranet site, see the Employee Resource Centre for details.

Upcoming Events

June 5, 6, 7, & 12, 13, 14, at 7:00 PM
Stage Door Presents "Zulius and the Fire Snake"

Location: 3102 Main Street, Vancouver

Tickets: \$10.00 Call 604-872-1252 for information.

June 15th – 11:30 am - 2:30 pm
Don't Sweat It Services Open House

Come to DSIS's open house at their new location at 7-8075 Enterprise St. in Burnaby!

June 20th – 1:00 - 4:00 pm
Facebook 101 Social Media Training (Voluntary)

Location: Head Office, Supervisors' computer lounge

June 21st – 9:00 am - 12:00 pm
Twitter 101 Social Media Training (Voluntary)

Location: Head Office, Supervisors' computer lounge

There will be 8-10 seats per session. To RSVP call Frank Davalos at (604) 299-4001 local 235 or email fdavalos@posAbilities.ca

June 21st – 10:30am - 1:30pm. Aegis Cultural Event

Come and enjoy some South Indian Cultural Fun and indulge in conventional South Indian traditions such as dancing, art, and everyone's favourite... EATING!

June 28th – 9:30am - 12pm Parent Support Network Meeting

posAbilities Head Office

RSVP to Monique Nelson at (604) 299-4001 ext. 270

July 1st - Registration opens for the 8th Annual Art Show

August 9th – 3:00 pm - 7:00 pm
posAbilities Annual Picnic – Save the date!

Location: Central Park Burnaby

Featuring delicious food, music, games, and much more like a visit from the Reptile Guy!

In Memory of John E. O. Nicholls

Former posAbilities Board Member

John passed away peacefully March 19th, 2012 after a long and courageous battle with Amyloidosis. He is survived by his loving wife Leslie, children Thalassa, Su (Oliver), John (Dolly), Chris, Colin and Lindsay (Tim), grandchildren Jaes, Anthony, Ike, Quinn and Evan, his sister Brenda McDonald, and many nieces, nephews and their families. He will also be greatly missed by his mother-in-law Mary, sister-in-law Marilynne (Michael) and Jonathan. After a successful career with CMHC, John spent many years in the private sector as a developer in Vancouver and in residential health care management in BC and Washington. For the last 18 years John enjoyed life on the Sunshine Coast. He was an avid sportsman and sports fan, cheering wildly through the Canucks' playoff runs, and he never jumped off the bandwagon. He was a golfer, a skier and a sailor. He played the ponies and loved to talk all sports. John loved to travel, venturing all over the world, even during his final years of illness. He laughingly told great stories, often at his own expense. He was a generous supporter, and previously served on the boards of the posAbilities, as well as the CanaDares Society which funds and helps operate an orphanage in Tanzania.

Reprinted from the Vancouver Sun, March 24, 2012

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Rob Burns Celebrates 20 years with posAbilities

Over the past 20 years Team Leader **Rob Burns** has seen tremendous change within the agency. Comments from his colleagues celebrate his professionalism, calmness and adaptability. We know Rob will be a big part of the continued success of the association, making a difference in the lives of persons served and supporting staff in the years to come. Many thanks for all that you do!



Sarina Ram leaves to further her career in Human Resources

We wish **Sarina** all the best as she moves forward in her career and thank her for her contributions to posAbilities' HR department, including her participation in the wellness and diversity committees. Her warmth and sense of humour will be missed! She leaves her work in the good hands of our newest employee **Charissa Dhaliwahl**, HR Confidential Assistant. Over the next few months, Charissa will be taking over benefit administration, training scheduling, other HR duties.



New Team Manager – Janey Roh

Janey Roh has a background of working with people who have mental health conditions, developmental disabilities, and addictions, and she is very pleased to be joining us as a new Team Manager. Make sure you introduce yourself to Janey the next time you pop by head office.



New Communications Assistant – Frank Davalos

Frank Davalos joins us for the next 8 months from Simon Fraser University. Frank is involved in the co-operative education program at SFU and he is currently in his fourth year studying Communications. Frank comes from Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, and in 2010, he moved out to the west coast to play lacrosse for Simon Fraser University. His other passions include writing, people, music, and the greater good.



New Business Manager for Don't Sweat It Services

Paul Colvin has over thirty years of business experience in the areas of accounting, sales, consulting, business coaching and entrepreneurship. Prior to joining posAbilities, Paul worked with the Neil Squire Society and Coast Mental Health supporting persons with physical disabilities and mental illnesses. Paul has been supporting Special Olympics for fourteen years in Burnaby acting in the roles of board member, program coordinator and coach. He has been to provincial, national and world games as both a coach and spectator.