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Imagine!

Montgomery Experiences Meraki

Contributed by Montgomery House

Over the past couple of months, the team at Montgomery House has been working closely with the Meraki team at posAbilities to select fun and novel activities for persons served to try out.

The first activity, selected by our Montgomery House Meraki Ambassador, Nilda Herrera, was to create our own beeswax food wraps. The Meraki team provided us with a box filled with all of the supplies needed to create our own zero-waste food wraps, along with some useful information about sustainable and eco-friendly options for keeping your food fresh.

On one cold January evening, Nilda and Bernadette pulled out the Meraki Box and got to work. They cut the fabric into the shapes and sizes they wanted, sprinkled on the beeswax, and melted it in the oven. Bernadette then used a paintbrush to spread the melted wax evenly across the fabric, and they hung their food wraps to dry.

meraki: to do things with soul, creativity, and love.

Once the wraps were dry, Bernadette and Nilda reviewed their handy-work and noticed that they needed to make some adjustments in order for the wraps to work properly. They didn't mind, because reviewing and making adjustments is all a part of learning. So they added some more beeswax to the wraps and were finally satisfied with the end product after the second go.

As a fun follow up, Bernadette attended another Meraki workshop at the end of the month. In this workshop, Bernadette learned more about the versatility of beeswax, and made her very own candle.

Everyone at Montgomery has been excited to try these new activities, and we can't wait to see what comes in the next box!

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Do you have a story for our quarterly newsletter or website?

Email: communications@posAbilities.ca or call (604) 299-4001 ext. 235.





Montgomery Experiences Meraki

Continued from Page 1

What is Meraki?

Meraki is a subscription-box service that introduces niche interests and passionate pursuits to people with developmental disabilities. Each box is inspired by a community muse — a backyard enthusiast, hobbyist, artist, entrepreneur, anyone really. Meraki comes from a year of research and learning alongside people with developmental disabilities and the staff who support them. Lots of folks shared they needed permission and resources to try new things and go outside their comfort zones. So voila! Every box comes packed with everything you need, including permission, to explore new things. Every box also comes with a Stretch Challenge to take you to new places and spaces in the community!

Curious to learn more? Join us at our Meraki Celebration (details TBA) to learn what we're all about. For more information, visit: www.merakiboxes.com



RSN Knitting Club Donates to Australian Wildfire Animal Rescue

Contributed by Richmond Social Network (RSN) Knitting Club

Since its beginnings, the RSN Knitting Club has participated in many charitable initiatives and donated numerous blankets, pillows, hats and scarves to hospitals and homeless shelters throughout the community. This year, our dedicated and skillful knitters decided to help the Australian wildfire animal rescue efforts. Beautiful nests were knitted and crocheted based on patterns developed specifically for Wildlife Rescue Nests for wildlife rehabilitators.

Ofa Tukutau was one of the knitters who made a great contribution to this project under the guidance of RSN knitting guru Vicki Albaracin. Ofa is happy that her work has helped baby birds and small animals in Australia. Everyone at RSN was proud to support this initiative and unite in this global effort to help those affected by the devastating fires.



Let's Get Real – Dating Club Blossoming

Have you heard of "Let's Get Real", the adult dating club hosted by Community Connectors? This group was created to connect adults who have an intellectual or developmental disability with potential partners, and to explore romantic relationships. The group is casual, fun and free - there is no referral required.

How it Works

Community Connectors (not parents or caregivers, if possible) set up the night with a mix of experiential dating exercises, facilitated discussions, games and food! They strive to create a safe space free of judgement in which all voices are honoured with respect and confidentiality. Together, the group operates on the values of inclusion, accessibility and diversity.

Members meet at various public venues about once a month, usually on a Wednesday, from 4-7pm.

Several couples have already emerged, a sure sign that more great connections will come! All have the opportunity to work on their social and friendship skills, with the potential to meet someone new.

For more information on upcoming events and how to get involved, email LGR@buildingcaringcommunities.ca





Photograph By © Manonallard - Istock

LINK! Addresses Possible Shortfall in Sexual Health Education

Discussing sex and sexuality, considered a taboo subject to some, can be even more stigmatized if you are a youth or adult with diverse abilities.

That's one reason why *posAbilities*, an agency providing services to those with developmental disabilities and their families, has developed a special program called LINK!, to address a possible shortfall in education.

"We recognized there were a lot of questions around sexual health and education and there wasn't anywhere for people to go get this information for youth and adults with diverse abilities," says Becky Roth, clinical supervisor and sexual health educator with *posAbilities'* Laurel Behaviour Support Services.

Last April, staff began exploring ways of delivering vital information on sex, sexuality and sexual health to groups and individuals, as well as their families and caregivers. And last September a curriculum was established.

LINK! is comprised of two mandatory sessions and eight electives. The mandatory sessions include subjects such as public vs. private, anatomy, consent, the law and peoples' rights, which provide a foundation to address more specific topics in the electives.

"Those include discussions about online safety and pornography, safer sex practices, learning about contraceptives and STIs ... the list goes on, making it relevant for people and their particular situations," Roth says.

"We were finding that, previously, people didn't really know what questions to ask, so they weren't getting the information they needed to explore their sexuality and relationships of an intimate nature," Roth says. *"As a result, we were also seeing folks engaging in inappropriate sexual behaviour, as well, due to a lack of education."*

"We often work with people who have been, or who could be in really vulnerable situations."

For example, Roth says that a recent training participant shared that he didn't know that "maybe" was not the same as "yes" when it comes to consent, and that he is more comfortable speaking to women since taking the course.

"There just weren't a lot of positive outcomes because people were not getting the proper information to make informed choices," Roth adds.

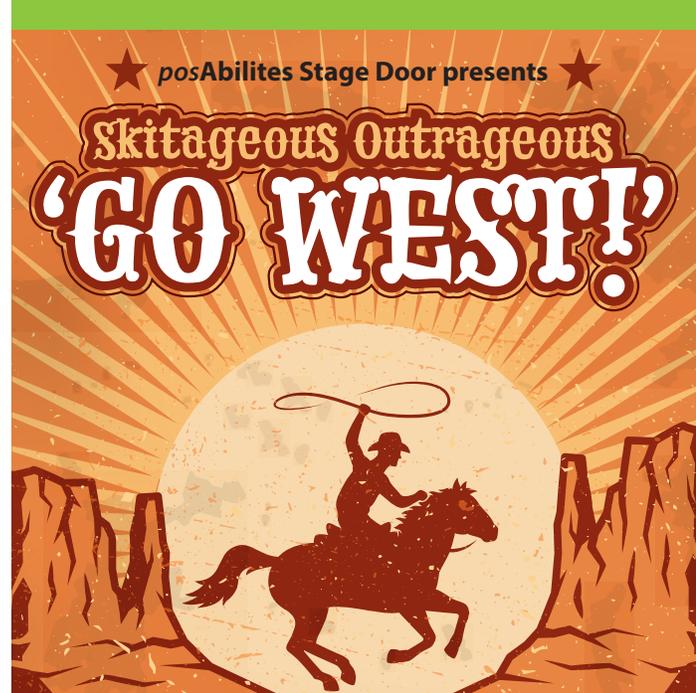
Now, that's all changing, thanks to LINK!.

"One overwhelming comment that kept coming up from people enrolled in LINK! was that they finally found an environment where they felt safe and comfortable to ask questions - questions about their bodies, about consent, what they should or shouldn't do, and sexual practices," Roth says.

Concurrently, assistance is provided for the families of those using LINK!.

"We have adapted training for caregivers, staff and parents," Roth says. *"That way, if questions came up at home, or a support setting, caregivers or family would be better equipped to have a discussion or provide resources to get more information to help to navigate sexuality, which is a complex and involved topic in and of itself."*

For more information about LINK! and how it could help, visit www.laurelbc.ca or contact us at LINKSRS@posAbilities.ca or 778-945-1435.



Stage Door Goes West

Saddle up and join the Stage Door posse as they present another edition of their hit skit comedy concept, *Skitageous Outrageous*. But this time they slip on some boots, tip their hats, and ride 'em on out, as they 'Go West'. It will leave you asking "What were those cowboys eating?" or "Do villains really grow their own flowers?" or "Would I trust a saloon doctor with my transplant?". Join us all down at the Horse Water Saloon for some cowpoke calamity. You won't be disappointed.

Showtimes: April 21, 22, 23, 28, 29, 30, 2020 – 7:30pm (doors open at 7pm).

*ASL interpretation services will be offered on April 28.

Contact: communications@posAbilities.ca to RSVP

Location: Stage Door Theatre - Heritage Hall (3102 Main St, Vancouver, back door)

Tickets: \$15 at the door.





What We Can Expect in Social Care

Inclusion BC recently shared an update for members on the 2020 provincial budget. Executive Director Karla Verschoor writes, "The theme of this year's budget was re-announcements and modest increases attached to existing caseloads. Budget 2020 highlights many of the significant investments made over the last 2.5 years but failed to meaningfully address the low benefit rates and housing shortages which are keeping people with disabilities in poverty." Here are a few highlights:

PWD Benefits – The Earning Exemption for people receiving income assistance was increased by 25%, impacting 3-4% (4,800 people) of those receiving persons with disabilities assistance. A single person can now earn up to \$15,000 and still receive assistance.

Community Living BC – Look for a modest increase in respite, about \$280 more annually for each person/family receiving support; a general increase in caseload funding to address the existing waitlist; and funds for sector wage increases to help with recruiting and retaining employees.

Housing – Housing continues to be a 'critical' priority for the government, but there was no targeted investment to address the affordability gap for those that rely on persons with disabilities assistance.

Children and Families – The primary strategy for poverty reduction remains to be the BC Child Opportunity Benefit coming into effect in this year's budget. This will be the strongest poverty reduction strategy to date for people with disabilities and their families, but alone this will not meet targets outlined in the plan. Affordable childcare plans continue to centre on developing spaces through school hubs. The most noteworthy investment in education is to continue to invest in new enrollments by making/renovating space.



Building a More Inclusive Province

"The lived experience of women, people of colour, gender-diverse people, and people with disabilities tells us we have more work to do to build a more inclusive province."

– 2020 B.C. Speech from the Throne

British Columbia is set to join the growing number of provinces in Canada that have accessibility legislation in place. Almost 25% of BC's population has some form of disability. The province is committed to developing laws, standards and policies to support people with disabilities to participate fully in their communities.

In the spirit of "Nothing about us, without us," the province held a public consultation to gather feedback from British Columbians on what the proposed legislation should look like. The recently released Summary Consultation Report outlines some of the key themes that emerged in the public's response. Curious to learn more about what our stakeholders said? Visit this site and get busy reading: <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/accessibility>

British Columbia Budget 2020

More information:

CLBC Service Plan 2020-2021 - <https://bit.ly/2ThkI5E>

BC Budget 2020 Documents - <https://bit.ly/32x8qVj>



EVERYBODY

BELONGS!

INCLUSION BC 2020

SURREY BC, MAY 21-23

Save the dates for BC's premier learning event for intellectual disability, inclusion and diversity!

We are gathering in Surrey at the Sheraton Vancouver Guildford Hotel, and Inclusion BC is proud to co-host with Uniti and the Self-Advocates of Semiahmoo. This conference will provide provocative keynotes, new connections and educational sessions that will help us realize a world in which "Everybody Belongs!"

posAbilities, InWithForward and Laurel Behaviour Support Services are pleased to be presenters. Be inspired by our Director of Innovation, Gord Tulloch, who alongside Dr. Sarah Schulman, Co-Founder of InWithForward, will warm up the crowd with innovative ideas on how we can all stretch our focuses, roles and frameworks to create good and full lives for everyone before each of the keynotes.



And wow! What a stellar line-up of keynote speakers we have this year, starting with best-selling author Margaret Wheatly, who will share insights from her latest book, *"Who Do We Choose to Be?"* on bringing out the best human qualities – generosity, insight, and compassion!



Following Margaret, is Sarah Jama, a community organizer and leader of the Disability Justice Network of Ontario. Sarah's talk, *"Putting Inclusion into Practice"*, will help us learn how we can move from talk to action, and build up our community and political power.



We will also hear from self-advocates Alexander Magnussen and friends about: *Youth Employment Summit (YES)*. Their focus will be on young people transitioning to the workforce, networking and building on the strengths, skills, and community that they have developed by producing more than 40 annual conferences. This work is funded by a generous grant through the Disability Alliance of BC.

The conference will be filled with all kinds of amazing workshops, and two of them will be presented by posAbilities team members! Check out the workshops by Behaviour Consultant and Clinical Manager Rebecca (Becky) Roth, who will speak to Aging with Autism; and the other will be presented by Certified Sexual Health Educators, Sherry Nassrin and Darren Frisk, introducing Laurel's new curriculum called LINK! – Sexuality and Healthy Relationships Education.

Don't forget to pop by our table in the marketplace, where we will have representatives there to meet you and share information about all of our services!

For more information on the conference, visit: <https://inclusionbc.org/our-services/inclusion-bc-conference/>



Vacation Planning for Sunny Days

Looking for a little something different to do this summer or next? We would like to share some cool international travel opportunities with you – time to plan and save!



2021 Alaska Northbound Cruise for People with Developmental Disabilities, Friends & Family

Hosted by Rosalie Newell-Wagner

How would you like to spend a week being pampered aboard an autism+ friendly cruise ship? The Royal Caribbean's Radiance of the Seas services include sensory friendly films and toys, dietary menu options, autism friendly training for Adventure Ocean staff and more. Meet new friends, try new activities like onboard rock wall climbing, and explore remote places like the Hubbard Glacier, all while learning from featured speaker Risca Solomon, BCBA (Skybound Therapies) from Pembrokeshire, Wales, UK.

The ship departs July 2, 2021 from Vancouver, BC. Make your reservation early to ensure you get the best cabin arrangement for your family. Your host, Rosalie Newell-Wagner has organized several family cruises, and would be happy to invite you to join the cruise Facebook page and answer any questions you may have.

For more details about pricing, please request a quote from Cheryl Scremin (Vancouver) at: cheryl.scremin@fcitravel.ca or 1-604-290-2895, or visit Cheryl's website: <http://www.flightcentreindependent.ca/>. All aboard!



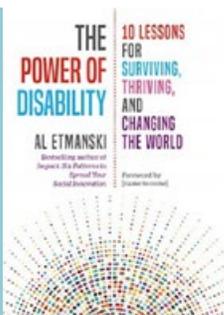
Go Sprout! Travelling Film Festivals and North American/ Island Vacation Getaways

You may have heard us rave about Sprout before – particularly in their work cultivating films that feature actors with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) and their efforts to share the talent far and wide. As a refresher, Sprout is a private non-profit organization that offers innovative programming related to the fields of intellectual and developmental disabilities, including film, travel and recreation programs. Their team is dedicated to growth through challenging and safe travel experiences and social activities.

What you may not have considered, is how many cool vacation opportunities they coordinate! Check out their 2020 Catalogue, and "start spreading the news" – as many of these adventures start in New York, New York! The variety of vacation places, themes, modes of travel and paces, ensure there is something for everyone! There are too many options to fully list, so I will touch on some highlights. All vacations include travel, accommodation, accident coverage, meals, supervision and activities. Themed travel interests include Disney, Elvis, Vegas, historical towns, dude ranches, beach buddies, and baseball fans. Trips span the eastern seaboard, with short cruises touching on Canadian ports of call, as well as exotic locations like Hawaii, Florida and the Bahamas. Check out the travel brochure and social media for details:

<https://gosprout.org/vacation-programs/2020brochure/>

<https://www.facebook.com/gosprout.org/>



What We're Reading

Al Etmanski is a community organizer, social entrepreneur, and author. He's been a parent activist in the disability world since his daughter Liz was born. Al's latest book "The Power of Disability: 10 Lessons for Surviving, Thriving, and Changing the World," recognizes people with disabilities for who they really are: authoritative sources on creativity, resilience, love, resistance, dealing with adversity, and living a good life. Read stories about people who have disabilities that you know locally and globally. Whether it's Liz Etmanski (Al's daughter), Michael J. Fox, Stephen Hawking or the late Judith Snow – there are many rich stories to learn from and inspire us in our work to help people flourish in their communities. To find out more about Al's work or to order the book, visit: <https://aletmanski.com/>. To borrow a copy, email: info@posAbilities.ca



Local Summer Camps

There are quite a few local summer camps for children and adults with disabilities. Check out the camps offered by Easter Seals of the BC/ Yukon, and note that registration is mostly online and open.

Overnight Summer Camp

A 6-day, nature-based, overnight program at a fully accessible camp where campers explore new activities and skills in a fun, supportive environment. Available in weeks for children/youth and adults.

Age Groups: 6-18 & 19-49 years

Locations: Winfield & Shawnigan Lake

Cost: Children/Youth \$800/week & Adults \$1000/week

New Camper Weekend

A 3-day, overnight program directed towards first-time campers (ages 6-18) and takes place at Camp Winfield. Available only to new campers who may want to try a shorter experience away from home before they go to a week-long option.

Age Group: 6-18 years

Location: Winfield

City Adventures Day Camp

A day program for campers (ages 13-18) living in the Vancouver and Victoria areas. Great option for campers who are interested in spending fun-filled days visiting local attractions, playing games and doing arts & crafts. Single day & week-long options.

Age Group: 13-18 years

Locations: Vancouver & Victoria

Cost: Details coming soon

Other Camp Options:

Zajac Ranch - <https://zajacranch.com/>

Eureka! - <https://www.eurekacamp.ca/camp-life>

Canucks Autism Network - Registration online opens May 27.
<https://www.canucksautism.ca/programs/summer-day-camp/>

Check out the options in your community, visit: www.findsupportbc.com and filter the database to find your summer fun!

Inclusive Housing Survey

The BC Non Profit Housing Association and Community Living BC have partnered on a survey to learn more about the housing needs, demands, and preferences of adults with a developmental disability who are living in BC. While we know there is a need for more affordable, accessible, and inclusive housing for adults with a developmental disability in the province, filling out this survey will help us to better understand and plan for that need.

The data collected in these surveys will be critical to help engage decision makers in communities throughout BC as well as assist CLBC, Inclusion BC, service providers, self-advocacy and family groups, housing organizations, developers, and municipal governments to make informed decisions about housing and service provision.

Caregivers, family members, and individuals are all welcome to fill in this survey. Help us reach our goal of 1,000 responses! We are about 70% there and need to hear your voices.

Please fill out the survey here: <https://bit.ly/2PvM1mi>



UPCOMING EVENTS

Knitting Club – Weekly Drop In

When: Every Monday, 10am-12pm

Where: Richmond Social Network (#140 - 5711 No 3 Road, Richmond)

Details: A great opportunity to learn a new skill—we welcome everyone of any and all skill levels! 604-275-0961, ext. 21 or 22.

CONNECT with PEERS® for Teens

When: March 16-27

Where: Laurel Behaviour Support Services (#240 – 4664 Lougheed Highway, Burnaby)

Details: A social skills camp specially designed to bring youth (ages 13-18) together to connect with peers and build friendships. www.laurelbc.ca

Leisure Fair

When: Wednesday, April 1, 6-8pm

Where: Sunset Community Centre - gym (6810 Main Street, Vancouver)

Details: Explore Lower Mainland recreation activities for children and youth with disabilities.

6th Annual Kudoz Growth Bash

When: May (date TBD)

Details: The Growth Bash honours community members living with and without developmental disabilities for their ongoing contributions to lifelong learning, self-discovery, and personal growth. www.kudoz.ca

posAbilities' Got Talent

When: Tuesday, May 19, 6-8pm

Where: Bonsor Banquet Hall (6550 Bonsor Avenue, Burnaby)

Details: Come showcase your talents at this premier event! Open to all team members and persons served – or perform together! Registration details are posted on ShareVision until March 31.

posAbilities' 16th Annual INCLUSION Art Show & Sale

When: Thursday, October 8, 10:30am-8:30pm

Where: Heritage Hall (3102 Main Street, Vancouver)

Details: Save the date! Artist registration opens in May.

www.inclusionartshow.com

Visit our events calendar online for updates and event notifications: www.posAbilities.ca/events