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With SaskAbilities' emphasis on client-centred programming, it wouldn't be a celebration without hearing directly from participants about their experience in the new space. Bryson Hildebrandt was invited up to the podium to say a few words at the grand opening. "It felt amazing to do the speech at Warman's Grand Opening! I had never been part of a press conference; it was my first time and it felt wicked! It is refreshing to come

to the program in Warman, there are varying perspectives and ideas. I have met some pretty awesome friends through SaskAbilities!"

Since opening its doors, the Warman day program has welcomed 10 participants with expectations to see that number grow as awareness spreads. For more information about the SaskAbilities day program in Warman please contact the Saskatoon Branch at 306.653.1694. 

**JOIN SASKABILITIES TODAY!**

I know my membership will help improve the quality of life for thousands of people experiencing disability in Saskatchewan.

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Or to join online visit our website: [saskabilities.ca](http://saskabilities.ca)



**VISION**

Working together to build inclusive communities for people of all abilities.

**MISSION**

SaskAbilities supports people experiencing disability with programs and services to enhance their lives.

**VALUES**

We treat people with respect, honesty and compassion.

Our programs and services are client-centred, goal-oriented and accountable.

We value teamwork, excellence and innovation.

*Working together to build inclusive communities for people of all abilities.*




**Looking Ahead to Move Forward**

In its second year since launching in 2021, the "Take Charge" program at Partners in Employment in Swift Current had an exciting opportunity this past summer for clients interested in a unique learning experience with horses. The six-week equine-assisted learning program provided 12 clients with the opportunity to visit Power Equine, a life skills development course provided by owner Tracy Hansen. While all participants gained valuable experience, one, in particular, saw a profound shift thanks to her teachers – the horses.

Anne is a young woman who was first introduced to the SaskAbilities Swift Current Branch through remote programming. Already a participant of the Quality-of-Life day program, Anne's employment goals found her moving closer to Swift Current to access new opportunities like Power Equine. With her deep love for animals, it didn't take any convincing from Support Worker, Rhonda Cruthers who just knew this would be an amazing opportunity for 23-year-old Anne. "The program gives people the power and the tools to develop and make the necessary changes to become the best version of themselves. I knew Anne would be a great fit because of the potential to help her make some difficult decisions in her own life, decisions that no one else could make but her. I'd say she went into this experience a young gal and she came out an empowered young adult – it just changed her." After one powerful session, Rhonda recalls Anne being very clear about her focus when the young woman stated, "I want to

move forward with my life, not backward."

SaskAbilities staff were not the only ones who noticed the progressive shift in Anne. During her once-a-week sessions at Power Equine, owner Tracy also noticed the changes. "She really took to the program. I think in large part her experience being around horses really helped. I could tell right away she definitely had a love for horses. Anne was really willing and able to connect with them and take in what they were trying to teach her. Because the program is all about the idea that the horses are the teachers, there's no one telling the participants exactly what to do and how to do it. It's about connecting and interacting with the horses, letting them be the guides. With Anne, I could see a huge increase in her self-confidence. Every time she came, it seemed to really build."

Reflecting on the experience herself, Anne credits the Power Equine program for helping her see the potential in her own future, advocating for herself, and readying herself to make some big changes. "It taught me how to move forward in my life, working with the horses taught me that," says Anne getting emotional as she admits it feels good to be able to use her voice and speak up for what she wants, including moving to Swift Current so she can be closer to her dad and potential employment opportunities. The future is very bright for Anne as she continues to grow in becoming the leader in her own life, a focused skill that is taught and celebrated at Power Equine. 



# A Workplace Culture of Inclusivity

## HIGHLIGHTING EMPLOYER CHAMPIONS, TOYS R US IN REGINA

**“The whole team has really come together to support the efforts of Partners in Employment and the individuals that we’ve hired through them.”**

**Ellen Blyth, General Manager, Toys R Us Regina**

There are some organizations and teams that “just get it” as Carmen Donald, Work Experience Coordinator at SaskAbilities Partners in Employment puts it when talking about the mutually beneficial relationship established with Toys R Us in Regina. While the brand and its stores are known as a retail powerhouse, that hasn’t prevented General Manager, Ellen Blyth and her team from infusing their own values of inclusivity into the Albert Street location’s workplace culture.

Leveraging the connection made before her, Carmen took the time to connect with Ellen and learn about the store’s employment needs. The relationship grew naturally as the two delved into possibilities that would provide Ellen the extra staff needed during seasonal high traffic times and provide jobseekers work experience in a fun, supportive and fast-paced environment.

When COVID-19 created challenges around hiring new staff, Carmen and Ellen got creative in figuring out a win-win process for both Toys R Us and Partners in Employment clients. After much discussion and planning, a socially distanced hiring blitz was organized at the Partners in Employment offices for Toys R Us. “Ellen thought that was a great idea because they often see applicants from Partners in Employment come in and they are really nervous. So how much easier would it be for the individuals to do the interview in an environment they already know? We played off each other and then the plan was

hatched. “Ellen brought in three managers, we had everything set up and organized, then we just cycled clients through the three interview rooms in a really comfortable office setting,” explains Carmen who is quick to note it wasn’t just Toys R Us and the clients who benefited from the whole experience; it was also an opportunity for strong team building amongst the Partners in Employment staff.

For Ellen and the team at Toys R Us, the opportunity to provide meaningful employment and work experience to individuals is something they see as essential and helpful to their business. “Everyone should have the opportunity to work. From an employer side, Partners in Employment gives us that support if we are struggling training an employee, they help us understand the barrier that the individual is experiencing in learning their role and that helps us find new ways to train and teach people.”

Today, both Carmen and Ellen are still actively invested in seeing clients successfully employed at Toys R Us. “Partners make it easier to fill our vacancies, which helps us run our business,” insists Ellen who has made offers of employment to 50% of clients Toys R Us has interviewed over the past three hiring blitzes. These offers of employment were for seasonal and part-time positions. The best news - two individuals hired for seasonal positions are now happily holding permanent jobs with Toys R Us. ♿



Taking the opportunity to reflect on the community’s support, Emily Hurd is grateful for the grand opening event’s turnout. “It was the first time many of us had gathered in that capacity for some time, and it felt really good. The energy in the room was palpable, people were happy and excited to be there. We’ve had such immense support from the community, including Martensville-Warman MLA, Terry Jenson who brought greetings on behalf of the Ministry of Social Services, Minister of Social Services Gene Makowsky, and the Mayor of Warman, Gary Philipchuk. It still feels very new so I think I’m most excited to see the integration of the day program and participants in the community over time, and the good things that will come from that.”

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# Saskatoon Region Celebrates New Day Program in Warman

“Building inclusive communities” is anything but a catchphrase for SaskAbilities. Mobilizing the organization’s vision, mission, and values has meant exploring opportunities to expand its reach by providing programs and services to new areas in the province, including rural communities. SaskAbilities’ Saskatoon Branch established its first satellite day program in Warman over the summer with the support of the Government of Saskatchewan that awarded a contract through the Ministry of Social Services. The grand opening celebrations were hosted on-site on November 4, 2022.

“There are so many growing communities in Saskatchewan where there is a need for services. Individuals should have the opportunity to contribute and share their skills and abilities in their home community instead of having to travel to do so. SaskAbilities is so pleased to provide day program services in Warman and we hope to have the opportunity to do more of this in the future!” said Emily Hurd, SaskAbilities Regional Director, Saskatoon Branch

# SaskAbilities Partners in Employment Saskatoon hosts its first Job Fair in recognition of DEAM



SaskAbilities Partners in Employment organized its first ever job fair in collaboration with Disability Employment Awareness Month (DEAM) on October 12, 2022, at TCU Place in downtown Saskatoon. The single-day job fair welcomed employers, recruiters, and schools, providing an opportunity for potential employees to get an overview of what it might look like to work for these organizations. The event even caught the attention of other employment support programs and agencies in Saskatoon that encouraged clients and participants to take the opportunity to attend.

With over 270 diverse jobseekers from every background and ability turning up, individuals were able to visit 42 employer booths from different industries across the province. Some notable organizations in attendance were SaskTel, Munchkin Mansion, Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools, BGC Saskatoon, Elmwood Residences, Service Master, SaskAbilities Camp Easter Seal, Loraas, Hope’s Home, EGADZ, Saskatchewan Health Authority, CIBC, and many others.

Feedback from the event was very positive as both jobseekers and employers took much away from the experience. “It has been great so far; I dropped my



resume with several employers. I have a background in IT, and I am working part-time now. I am looking for a job to get a few more hours, I hope to hear back from some of them,” shares Kyle, a previous beneficiary of SaskAbilities services.



Elmwood Residences in Saskatoon took part saying, “It has been really great. We have done a couple of different job fairs and today we got more resumes than we ever have. And lots of people who were here were generally interested in finding out what we do and not just check out the booth.”

Reflecting on their busy and very successful first job fair, Partners in Employment sees the event as a positive experience for everyone who took part – including their team! “The idea behind a job fair is to create an opportunity for job seekers and clients to meet at a place where they can interact, network, and find work. The job fair created that space. A couple of job seekers were excited to end the day knowing they had a few interviews set up. “Overall, I’m just really proud of the Partners and Employment team for going ahead with this initiative and making it a great networking event for everyone,” expresses David Nwosu, employment coordinator with SaskAbilities Partners in Employment Saskatoon. ♿

# CELEBRATING ANOTHER SEASON OF

## 2023 EASTER SEALS SNOWARAMA

Celebrating a whopping 46 years of supporting Easter Seals™ Saskatchewan programming, the Snowarama organizing committee is in full swing as the February 25, 2023, event date is fast approaching. Having raised over \$2.5 million since 1977, the annual snowmobiling event has become woven into the fabric of the Yorkton and area community, often seeing generations of family members partake together... and at times eliciting a healthy dose of friendly competition between neighbours, community members, and local businesses. Sorry, not sorry!

Whether you are jumping on board as a first-time fundraiser, or this is your umpteenth time showing support for SaskAbilities and Easter Seals™ Saskatchewan, this is what you need to know for this year’s Snowarama event:

- The fun kicks off on Friday, February 24 with a Beer & Wing Night at SaskAbilities, 162 Ball Road
- Registration begins at 8AM with the event kicking off at 10AM on Saturday, February 25 at SaskAbilities, 162 Ball Road
- A minimum of \$150 in pledges per person must be raised to participate
- Fundraising can be done individually or as a team
- The event boasts 100km of beautifully groomed and marked trails, complimentary meals, fuel, Snowarama swag, and a complimentary ticket to the Awards Banquet
- The Awards Banquet is being held at St. Mary’s Cultural Centre, Saturday evening
- There is no shortage of prizes to be won throughout the event
- The funds raised at Snowarama go towards Easter Seals™ Saskatchewan programming, including Camp Easter Seal, Summer Fun, and Adaptive Technology Services

Participants are welcome from far and wide – just bring your pledges, winter gear, and snowmobile and be ready for a good time! To keep up to date on all things Snowarama, please visit the Easter Seals™ Snowarama SK Facebook page @EasterSealsSnowarama; the website snowarama.ca; or contact Deana Stroshein, Event Coordinator at 1.833.444.4126. ♿