SaskAbilities

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Regina	(306) 569-9048
Swift Current	(833) 526-5299
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Kilburn	(306) 653-1694
Provincial Services	(306) 374-4448

We welcome your comments.

SaskAbilities
2310 Louise Avenue
Saskatoon SK S7J 2C7

E-MAIL:
communications@saskabilities.ca

ONLINE:
saskabilities.ca

Publication Mail Agreement No. 40069020 Return Undeliverable Canadian Addresses to:
SaskAbilities
2310 Louise Avenue
Saskatoon, SK S7J 2C7

Curating an Adaptive Technology Library for Young Patients at Jim Pattison Children's Hospital

The Alvin Buckwold Child Development Program at Jim Pattison Children's Hospital is utilizing Adaptive Technology Services at SaskAbilities to help provide the speech language pathologist rehabilitation team with a library of new technology tools. Funded by the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital Foundation, these resources will assist the team members in supporting young patients with injuries or disorders that have restricted their ability to communicate while they access care at Jim Pattison Children's Hospital.

"Adaptive technology is a relatively new area for the pediatric rehabilitation team, allowing us to concentrate solely on communication," shares Jennifer Bacon, a member of the speech language pathology rehabilitation team at Jim Pattison Children's Hospital, who is very familiar with Adaptive Technology Services at SaskAbilities. "I have worked at the Alvin Buckwold Child Development Program for many years, and Adaptive Technology Services at SaskAbilities is one of our primary providers." This longstanding collaboration is particularly meaningful, as Dr. Alvin Buckwold played a crucial role in the early years of SaskAbilities, fostering the development of programs and services, including Camp Easter Seal.

Currently, the team is working on increasing access to communication technology devices for young patients at the hospital. The goal is to be able to provide patients with something on the spot as soon as possible," explains Jennifer, further emphasizing the collection of resources is intended for use in the hospital, helping children and their families understand what communication devices are available, which options best suit their needs, and how to use them effectively.

With a list of over 20 items and devices on order, Owen Hein, Adaptive Technology Services' electronics technologist, is eager for everything to arrive. "It's a long list with some really great high-tech tools and resources. There is still some work on my end. Some of the low-tech items I'm going to be making in-house to keep costs down include the head-mounted pointers and head-mounted laser pointers. Once everything arrives, then we can get things programmed, put together, and delivered."

With young patients awaiting access to these essential tools, the ongoing collaboration between SaskAbilities, the Alvin Buckwold Child Development Program, and Jim Pattison Children's Hospital, supported by funding from the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital Foundation, will surely make a significant difference in the lives of children, youth, and their families across the province.

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VOL 57 NO.1 | OCTOBER 2026

SPLASH

SaskAbilities ConnectAbilities

Easter Seals Saskatchewan

Family Camp Takes in the Community Spirit for Canada Day

Camp Easter Seal celebrated Canada Day by embracing the fun and community spirit of the Manitou Beach parade. Coinciding with family camp week, campers were delighted to watch from the sidelines or, for some, to join in the action, as part of Camp Easter Seal's presence in the parade.

Despite the gray clouds and potential for rain, the 10 AM start time went ahead as planned, with Maclaughlan Avenue lined on both sides with spectators of all ages, including many families from Camp. Loud cheers erupted from the street as Camp's recognizable accessible bus made its appearance, followed by two groups of staff members and campers onboard The Goose, which included best buds Liam and Mason with their moms along for the ride!

With participation from local politicians, vintage car clubs, and even an appearance by Batman, the event was an overwhelming success! There were no complaints about the candy haul, at least from the kids, who were more than happy to receive generous handfuls of sweet treats and gummy candies from enthusiastic parade participants!

The Canada Day parade wrapped up just in time for a light sprinkle of rain as campers made their way back to Camp Easter Seal, enjoying a relaxed morning before lunch and afternoon activities.

To learn more about Camp Easter Seal summer camps, including family camp, visit *camp.saskabilities.ca*.

Words from campers and staff members about the event:

"That was so much fun! What a great parade, we need to do that again sometime!" – Mason, Camper

"I have so much candy! I probably have more than I did at Halloween. I'm not sharing with my sister though; she has her own stash." – Kiera, Camper

"I was thinking the clouds were going to open up at any point and we'd get soaked but we would have stayed either way. The kids had a great time - who knew Batman was going to show up! – Camper mom

"The parade is something fun for families to do on Canada Day, and it's nice for us to participate and be part of the community in a visible way. It's a win-win." – Steve Grove, Camp Easter Seal manager

Celebrating Summer with the 1st Annual Hole-in-Fun Classic

Come rain or shine, day program participants at the Yorkton Branch celebrated the start of summer at York Lake Golf and Country Club with the inaugural Hole-in-Fun Classic. Kicking off its first year on June 1 and 2, the event featured an exciting roster of activities, including footgolf, swing practice at the driving range, and a barbecue lunch.

FYI: Footgolf is a relatively new, hybrid sport that combines elements of both soccer and golf. It involves kicking a soccer ball into larger, 21-inch, cups on a golf course. The goal is to get the ball into the hole with as few kicks as possible.

The event, inspired by footgolf superfan and day program participant Tanner, was conceptualized by his mom, Daelyn, after touring the Yorkton Branch. "On Tanner's first day, I asked if anyone here had ever played footgolf, since it's one of his favorite activities. I learned that while some participants had played, not everyone had the opportunity due to the cost," shares Daelyn. With the help of her husband, Chris, who works at the York Lake Golf and Country Club, the family came up with the idea for the Hole-in-Fun Classic, making footgolf accessible to all participants.

With lots of planning and help from SaskAbilities, the goal to bring everyone together for a morning of activity and fun unfolded better than anyone could have imagined! "It felt great seeing everyone having a good time," shares Tanner enthusiastically, "It was the BEST!"

Despite the rain on both days, no one let a little water dampen their spirits; instead, participants embraced the weather, singing and dancing in the rain! "I had so much fun - footgolf was my favourite," expresses program participant Cianna. "I hope we can go back again," a sentiment that was shared by both participants and staff. "It truly was a magical few days – everyone being together with their friends, playing activities, and coming together at the end for the barbecue! It was such a great kick-off to summer. To be honest, everyone just had such a great time," shares Tara Schuster, supports facilitator at the Yorkton Branch.

Special thanks to Tanner, Daelyn, Chris, and the team at York Lake Golf and Country Club.

Adventures and Activities at Summer Fun in Swift Current

Every year, as warm weather approaches and spring gives way to summer, SaskAbilities gears up for the excitement and joy of Summer Fun programming. For two months in July and August, Summer Fun day camps offer children and youth community-based, outdoor, and group recreational activities designed to foster community inclusion, encourage social skill development, and enhance the self-confidence and self-esteem of participants.

This summer, the Swift Current Branch organized a wide range of adventures and activities for Summer Fun participants, who enjoyed day trips, park visits, and local tours. Each week, staff members planned activities around popular themes including dinosaurs, farm animals, and planes, trains, and automobiles. Tuesdays were set aside for memorable day trips, which included visits to the Western Development Museum in Moose Jaw, Grotto Gardens in Maple Creek, and the T. Rex Discovery Centre in Eastend. "A big highlight for participants, of course, are those day trips, as well as park days and local tours around our community. This summer participants visited such places as the fire hall, ambulance station, and one of the local grocery stores," shares Kara Spur, program senior supervisor at the Swift Current Branch.

From Monday to Friday, staff members welcomed participants in two groups, those aged 6 to 12 in the morning and older participants aged 13 to 22 in the afternoon. With many participants returning over the years, the Summer Fun team was excited to reconnect with some familiar faces. "A highlight for our team was seeing how much participants have grown and their increased interest in trying new things. It was also really special to see the friendships they have maintained over the years while also watching them build new friendships this summer," expresses Emily Mickleborough, a returning summer student at the Swift Current Branch.

As summer concludes and the Summer Fun programming across the regions wraps up for another year, Emily reflects on the valuable insights gained during the season. "Being flexible can often keep things fun and engaging. Things aren't always going to go as planned, especially when factors like weather are out of your control. It's okay to switch things up. Offering different activities helps in understanding which ones the participants really enjoyed and which ones they were less interested in, which we take into consideration for future planning of Summer Fun.

UNITED IN RED FOR NATIONAL ACCESSABILITY WEEK

On Wednesday, June 3, SaskAbilities branches across the province participated in Red Shirt Day® for National AccessAbility Week. While each branch celebrated in its own unique way with various activities and sharing across Facebook, the initiative invites all Canadians to wear red in a powerful show of solidarity with people experiencing disability and their families. Launched by Easter Seals™ Canada in 2019, participation is simple but meaningful: put on your favourite red shirt, snap some photos, and make a pledge to improve accessibility and inclusion in your community.

Red Shirt Day® is also a powerful reminder of what becomes possible when inclusion is a priority and barriers to accessibility are removed. At SaskAbilities, that transformation is witnessed firsthand everyday through programs like Camp Easter Seal, Adaptive Technology Services, and Summer Fun day camps. Individuals across all ages, backgrounds, and abilities flourish when their environment is set up for success.

"This is a day of inclusivity and also a celebration, recognizing how far we've come as a community and society while not losing focus on the fact that we still have work to do. I'm excited that every Branch at SaskAbilities participated in Red Shirt Day®. It is important as Easter Seals™ Saskatchewan that we support these national initiatives and participate as Canadians in National AccessAbility Week."
– Donna Mouflier, community relations coordinator, Regina Branch

Red Shirt Day® falls within National AccessAbility Week, a Government of Canada initiative established in 2017 that runs from the last Sunday in May each year. In 2026, National AccessAbility Week took place from May 31 to June 6. To learn more, visit *www.easterseals.ca*.

Easter Seals™ Saskatchewan

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