

#1 INTEGRATION NEWS FROM COMMUNITY SUPPORTS OF EASTERN TOWNSHIP (CSET)

The community integration staff of CSET are excited to announce that one of their longtime clients, Johnny Doe, has successfully registered for a mainstream art program at the Eastern Township Gallery.

“It took many years to get Johnny ready for this, like a lot of people we support, he has behaviours that make it difficult to be successful in the community,” said Jenny Jones, CSET Community Integration Supervisor.

When first approached by CSET staff, the ETG was very uncertain about welcoming Johnny.

“I was assured that CSET staff would be right next to Johnny at all times, so we had a meeting and decided, let’s give it a try,” said Art Brush, Chair of the ETG board. “When Jenny showed up with two other CSET staff and Johnny, I knew they were going to keep their promise.”

As it turns out, CSET did such a great job preparing Johnny to join the program, Mr. Brush approached Jenny at the end of the first evening to say that if Johnny was OK with coming on his own, there wasn’t any need for the extra support.

“He just followed right along like everyone else and frankly, he’s pretty advanced for this class,” said Mr. Brush. “A lot of others in the class have been watching him paint so they can improve their own work.”

As this is his first time out in the community on his own, Jenny continues checking in with Johnny and is pleased to report that the ETG program is his favourite activity since he first came to CSET twenty years ago.

#2 EMPLOYMENT NEWS FROM COMMUNITY SUPPORTS OF EASTERN TOWNSHIP (CSET)

The integrated employment staff of CSET are excited to announce that one of their longtime clients, Larry Contrary, has been given a job by ET Small Engine Repair on Main Street.

“We put Larry through our 300-point Job Readiness Assessment Tool, and the J-RAT told us that he would probably be best suited to the fast-food industry,” said CSET integrated employment coordinator Jeff Jefferson. “We tried that out with 7 different employers and Larry just couldn’t do the work well enough, so we had to change gears, because he was kind of giving up on employment.”

At Larry’s previous job, it turned out that he was taking all of his coffee breaks and lunch breaks to spend time at the small engine repair shop on the other side of the mall.

“The J-RAT didn’t ask Larry about this so we didn’t know – turns out he’s a wizard at fixing lawnmowers, snowblowers, you name it, he can probably fix it!” said Larry.

Fortunately, shop co-owner Allie Ways realized Larry was more than just browsing the store, and was so impressed with his knowledge and experience that she offered Larry a job.

“I didn’t realize Larry was in a program, so after I offered the job, CSET got involved, and I found out from Jeff that I could hire Larry with a 50% wage subsidy, which was quite a nice surprise!”

Jeff is not surprised by that CSET did such a good job helping Larry find employment that he enjoys. “We never gave up on Larry. It was a long road but totally worth it!”

#3 A STAR IS BORN: CANADIAN TELEVISION NEWS (CTN)

Jesse Jets lives with Down syndrome, but she doesn't let her disability get in the way. Not anymore!

After four years on the bench of her high school volleyball team, last week her teammates approached Coach Joe Jones about giving Jesse a chance to play.

"We were losing badly in the last game of the year, so I figured, what the heck," said Jones. "I was always worried Jesse would get hurt or something, so I never saw her play before even in practice. I didn't realize she'd played all the time in Junior High in gym class, because boy, was I shocked to see how well she could serve, and she was setting the ball so well, we almost came back and won!"

Some fans at the game started taking video and the recordings have gone viral.

"It was like a miracle. I had no idea people with Down syndrome could play team sports with non-disabled people" posted David Davidson on Instagram.

I asked Jesse what is next for her. She said she would like to attend ET College and join the Sport Business Management program. We contacted the college, who suggested that Jesse might prefer their Special Opportunities college program, which is situated in a separate building on campus and tailored for people with special needs. Jesse seems determined to attend regular college courses: will there be another miracle?

#4 SASKATOBA GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES TRANSFORMATION FOR DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Today the Minister for Disability Citizenship for the Province of Saskatchewan (DCPS) is pleased to announce the launch of Road to Opportunity, a transformational reform process to improve the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities.

“We are hearing a lot of voices for change. Families want more choices for their loved ones with developmental disabilities. Inclusion is the future, and we are pleased to be joining with our community partners to begin that process,” said DCPS Minister Charlene Charles.

The key feature of Road to Opportunity will be CHOICE.

“Everyone has their own idea of what inclusion means,” said Charles. “For some it is living together with other people with disabilities, where they have everything they need in one place – program space and agency staff. We are going to be investing heavily in agencies that are ready to build multi-residential homes where large numbers of people with developmental disabilities can be housed together, right from their 20s into their senior years.”

The government will also support experimental housing models. This includes people with developmental disabilities living in a range of existing housing such as apartments or houses alongside other tenants and owners.

“We are already investing about 10% of our budget in this emerging Supported Independent Living concept, like a person having an apartment of their own, or sharing a townhouse with a roommate, and we plan to maintain that commitment.”