

Wheelchair Square Dancing BY NANCY LEAR

I was introduced to wheelchair square dancing as part of a recreation activity at The Hub Recreational Centre in St. John's, Newfoundland. For a small town girl, moving into the city was a big deal. When I became a member of The Hub, my life was enriched and I was connected to an enormous social network. I made a lot of friends and the activities there helped shape my world. I created lifelong friendships in those early days and whenever we get together now, we reminisce about the "good old days".

One day, the Hub's recreational director came to the membership and asked if we'd like to try wheelchair square dancing. She knew a woman from the Square and Round Dancing Club who would teach us if we had at least eight willing participants. There was enough interest, a flyer notice was posted with the date and time of the introductory class, and the evening arrived.

If you haven't heard of wheelchair square dancing, some of the basic rules are: you need eight dancers (four couples) who make up a square; and a caller who choreographs the different figures or steps to the beat of music and then speaks or sings those calls while the

dancers perform. The couples form a square all facing into the center. The couple with their back to the caller and the couple facing them are the head couples, while the other couples facing each other are the side couples.

There are many standard figures to learn from basic, mainstream, plus and advanced, but practice makes perfect which is why we practice once a week. When all the dancers are in sync, it is amazing to watch, loads of fun and provides an awesome sense of accomplishment.

Even when there are wrong turns and dancers turn right when they needed to turn left, it's all a part of learning and growing as a square dancer.

Pam Kipnis was our caller in Newfoundland and our club was The Hub Square Wheelers. Our club met once a week and we reached mainstream level very quickly, with minor hiccups along the way—it was all part of the fun! We had different costumes, but our Newfoundland tartan was our favourite.

We did demonstrations for the public and service groups to spread the word about this awesome social

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activity for people who use wheelchairs. We held our group for five years and fundraised for two Square and Round Square Dancing Conventions: Halifax (1988) and Vancouver (1990). We met many other wheelchair square dancers from all over Canada and it was overwhelming to meet such wonderful people!

Those experiences have stayed with me to this day. I am forever grateful to Pam Kipnis for offering her expertise to teach our group wheelchair square dancing.

In 1992, we said a sad goodbye to Pam and wheelchair square dancing when she moved away to Kamloops. Little did I know, I would rekindle my passion for wheelchair square dancing 20 years later by joining The Wheeling Eights when I moved to BC in 2013!

The Wheeling Eights is based in Surrey and choreographed by Tyler Wagner. The club has a great bunch of people.

We practice at Chuck Bailey Recreation Centre every Thursday evening from 6:30pm – 8:15pm, and then we have a social with refreshments and treats which the members provide. We also do demonstrations to show others what fun we have inside and out!

Please come and kick up your wheels! ●

Simpler and More Accessible Tech



Imagine your life without email, text messaging, photo sharing or, for that matter, a computer. For people with physical disabilities, their independence can depend on their ability to use technology. A new Vancouver company, Claris Healthcare, is aiming to make internet communication accessible to everyone with Claris Companion.

Claris Companion is an elegant cloud-based communication device that can be placed in the home to display email, text messages, video calls and reminders. The device is completely managed by a secure website accessible to invited family and caregivers. It features a large 10.1" touchscreen with large text and buttons that respond even to people with mild tremor, Parkinson or dexterity issues. The device is always on so messages and notifications are displayed instantly on the screen without having to login or launch applications.

In designing the product, Claris looked at ways to make internet technology more accessible—and less threatening to those who don't get along well with the common,

finicky technologies in general use. Claris has made email and text messaging more like a good old-fashioned telephone—after all, you don't have to enter a user name and password to answer the phone. And with Claris Companion, you don't have to check your email—new messages just appear on the screen.

Companion does more than just display emails, text messages and photos though. It is also a medication and appointment reminder system, a video chat device and a way to gain access to specific self-care information provided by caregivers.

In the background, Claris Companion serves as an alerting system, letting family members know if there is a potential problem, such as missed medications or appointments. Users can also elect to have a "Daily Check-in" or send out a "Call Me" request to selected friends, family or caregivers—all by touching a single on-screen button.

Geof Auchinleck, CEO of Claris Healthcare, says "Prior to launching Claris, we looked at communication products that were designed for people with disabilities, and felt that there was definitely room for improvement. So we took the time to solve many of the small issues that make technology inaccessible such as finicky charging connectors, unresponsive buttons and overly complicated workflow. And so far our users are telling us we've got it right."

Vancouver-based Claris launched the Companion in 2012. Visit www.clariscompanion.com. ●

Painter's Home is a Gallery BY LILY CHEUNG

I recently had the pleasure of meeting Joan and Jim Fustey in Surrey, BC. Joan and Jim have been long-time residents of Surrey and have been married for over 55 years. During my visit, I couldn't help but notice the inviting paintings adorning the walls and had to inquire what the stories were behind these stunning works. I learned they were created by Joan herself.

Joan started painting about 20 years ago, well into her adult life. She initially started painting fine art on furniture under the guidance of Jeanea Miles. Joan subsequently developed her skills and passion for watercolour at Carolyn Findlay's Studio, where she painted alongside Carolyn for several years.

Lately, Joan has continued to master her craft in Debra Gow's Langley studio. Joan's passion is expressed in an ethereal world of feathered creatures and undulating vines. Her streetscapes are just as engaging.

The details on the furniture evoke a sense of subtlety and intimacy. She explained to me that the acrylic paint on the furniture is layered with 8 coats of varnish to seal the artwork beneath. Her home is like a gallery.

When asked if her art is for sale, she explained it is for personal pleasure and not on the market. What keeps Joan painting? She shares with me the community of artists she has connected with has been an absolute joy. For Joan, the friendly fellowship of the arts has always made painting a worthwhile endeavour. ●



New BCITS Videos Online



Good news! Our website has been updated with step-by-step videos on how to use some of our TIL equipment, such as the Ameriphone, GEWA and X-10.

And do you have questions about suctioning? Would you like to know how to set low pressure alarms?

We've produced new PROP videos to help you troubleshoot at home. Topics covered include: emergency preparedness planning, emergency case scenario troubleshooting, how to set the low pressure/disconnect alarm on the PB560, ventilator circuit adjuncts, and suctioning.

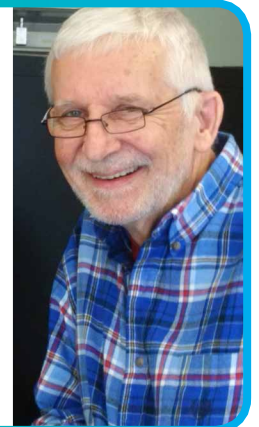
Visit <http://www.bcits.org/videostil.htm> to view the videos.

We Take Requests!

Please give us your feedback and let us know which topics you would like to see made into a video. ●

Farewell to Simon Cox

After over 35 years of service and support in the disability community, our Executive Director, Simon Cox, is leaving BCITS at the end of March. By the time this *BALANCE* is published, we hope many of you will have joined us at a farewell Roast for Simon in March. In the next edition of *BALANCE*, we'll take you inside the event with photos and testimonials. Until then, we know you all join us in wishing Simon the very best in the next phase of his "retirement."



balance

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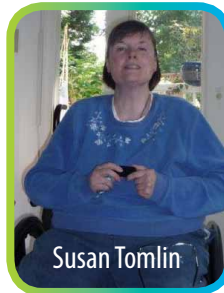
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Annual Kin Klassic BY REBECCA JENSEN



Susan Tomlin

The 2014 Kin Klassic Golf Tournament was a success! The Kinsmen Foundation of BC and BCITS organized the event to fundraise for their programs. All the money that was raised will go toward excellent causes, one of which is the Door Opener Program which supplies automatic door openers to people in BC who are not able to operate their doors otherwise.

Thanks to money raised through the golf tournament and a grant of \$25,000 from BC Rehab Foundation, one Maple Ridge resident, Susan Tomlin, is finally able to get in and out of her apartment without struggle, anxiety and stress.

She has experienced new-found independence since she received the new door. She doesn't dread leaving her home or worrying what would happen if her health declined further.

If door access is a challenge for you, fill out an application form at <http://bcits.org/becomeclient.htm> or call 604-326-0175 with enquiries.

The Kinsmen Foundation also use the funds they raise to assist people with disabilities in the community. Nationally, the organization is currently interested in helping Canadians with cystic fibrosis. In BC, their aim has moved from fighting polio, to rehabilitation for people with polio, to helping people with all physical disabilities. If you're interested in helping Kinsmen with its worthy

goal, you can volunteer to help run events like the golf tournament. You can also join a club in your area. Go to www.kin5.ca to find a club near you.

Next year's tournament will be held September 17, 2015. We're looking for prizes and golfers.

Please contact Clara Chalifour at cchalifour@bcits.org for more information. ●

Welcome Our New ED



Elaine McNaughton joined BCITS on January 19 as our new Executive Director. She will be working with outgoing Executive Director, Simon Cox, who is retiring at the end of March.

Elaine hails from Ottawa and, for 25 years, was the Executive Director of Personal Choice Independent Living (PCIL), an attendant care and housing agency serving people with disabilities and at-risk seniors. While there, she established services for people who use ventilators.

Elaine and her husband are dedicated fly fishermen. Both of their children make their homes in Victoria.

Elaine says that, "BCITS only exists to serve you, the client, and your input is essential to all that we do. Over the next few months, I plan to visit the regions we serve so I can meet as many clients as possible, closer to home. Please feel free to call, email or drop by the office." ●

BCITS Participates in the REE at the ROO



BY WAYNE POGUE

Every year, Ian Denison and his team from GF Strong, host the Rehab Equip-

ment Expo (REE) and last year the Expo was held on September 9 at the Richmond Olympic Oval (ROO). BCITS was proud to participate again and we look forward to attending as long as they keep hosting this wonderful event.

Until two years ago, the event was held at the Seaforth Armoury, at Burrard and 1st Avenue in Vancouver. The space was adequate, but small and a little dark.

Now that the event has moved to the Richmond Olympic Oval, the event has become a prime event for the assistive technology community. Not only is it easy to get to, but it's beautiful, spacious, bright and located directly across the Fraser River from the airport. During the free lunch, you'll see many attendees sitting outside watching the airport and river traffic.

The event space is filled with equipment and service displays from manufacturers, distributors, service organizations and non-profits, and attended by consumers and clinicians from community and health facilities. Although we are there to discuss BCITS (primarily TIL), another reason we love this event is that it brings the huge assistive technology community together for a day of exchanging ideas and learning about the great new services available to the public.

Educational sessions are held throughout the day, including consumer reviews, care strategies and emerging technologies, to name a few.

The event summary says, "The purpose of Rehab Equipment Expo is to give clinicians and consumers in the community, and health facilities access to information needed to make educated decisions regarding the purchase of assistive technology. The event draws well over five hundred clinicians and almost one hundred exhibitors."

There is also an educational side to the REE at the ROO. Educational sessions are held throughout the day, including consumer reviews, care strategies and emerging technologies, to name a few. There is also a funding panel available during

lunch to answer questions about funding options in BC.

So, come next September 9, 2015, when the summer is winding down, if you feel like a free lunch and you want to learn about services and products available to you, please join us at the 2015 REE at the ROO. We would love to see you all there. Stop by our booth and say hi!

Again, we would like to thank Ian Denison for coordinating the event and continuing to invite us back. The assistive technology community really appreciates and needs the REE at the ROO! ●



Registered Disability Savings Plan and Disability Tax Credit

Advocates at Disability Alliance BC (formerly BC Coalition of People with Disabilities) help people to apply for the Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP) and Disability Tax Credit (DTC). This assistance can include going with someone to their bank to help them with the RDSP.

The RDSP is a great savings opportunity, even for people living on very low incomes. Here are some examples:

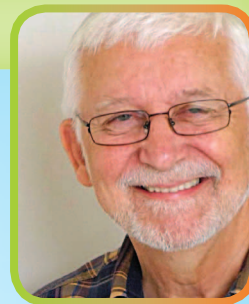
- A person opens an RDSP when they're 30 years old and deposits their \$250 GST cheque each year. By the time they're 60, their RDSP could be worth as much as \$100,000.
- People can open an RDSP with no deposit and those living on low income are entitled to receive an annual \$1,000 bond from the Federal government for up to 20 years.
- People who deposit \$500 a year are entitled to a \$1,500 grant every year for up to 20 years.
- People receiving income assistance who open an RDSP can access \$150 through the Endowment 150 program from the Vancouver Foundation.
- People receiving disability benefits can put money in or take money out of an RDSP without it impacting their monthly cheque.

For more information, please contact Lillian at DABC at 604-872-1278 or 1-800-663-1278. ●



we are all
connected

Help Us Fulfill Our Vision



BCITS, proud home of PROP and TIL, is a registered non-profit and charitable organization. The funds to operate these programs come from the Ministry of Health, through the Vancouver Coastal Health region. We are very grateful for this generous support.

However, this funding does not cover the costs to provide equipment to TIL clients. For example, a special telephone for a person with a high level disability can cost as much as \$1000 and an automatic door opener can cost \$3000.

We provide many devices like these to adults—at no cost—to fulfill our vision of people living in the community as independently as possible.

You can help us continue this work through your donation. Any contribution large or small will be gratefully accepted. **100% of your donation will go toward equipment and assistive devices.**

Thank you, Simon Cox, BCITS Executive Director
Charitable Registration Number 807477070RR0001

Yes, I would like to support TIL's equipment program.

- I enclose a cheque for \$ _____.
- I will make a donation by credit card through CanadaHelps.org. [Donate in minutes by clicking on the CanadaHelps button on our home page at www.bcits.org.]
- I would like to donate directly by VISA. I will call Clara Chalifour at 604-326-0175.

Please be sure to fill in all your contact details, so we can send your tax receipt (for donations of \$10 or more).

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY & PROVINCE

POSTAL CODE

PHONE

EMAIL

Please return this form to: BCITS, #103-366 E. Kent Ave S., Vancouver, BC V5X 4N6

The Latest Smartphone Apps

BY SAMIKO GUEST

In this article, I would like to introduce and review a couple of useful and interesting apps for our clients who use smartphones.

AroundMe



AroundMe is a very popular location-based app that allows you to find nearby places, such as banks, gas stations, parking, hospitals, hotels, restaurants, movie theatres, and many more service and business locations. The app uses your smartphone's GPS (Global Positioning System) feature to determine your current location and then searches places around you. Your smartphone must be connected to the internet in order to use this app.

The app is especially useful when you are in an unfamiliar place. It will provide you with detailed information for each establishment, such as contact number, address, business hours and reviews. It also gives you a route map and the distance from where you are. AroundMe is a free app for both iOS and Android devices.

For iOS devices, AroundMe is compatible with iOS 5.0 or later.

Available at: <https://itunes.apple.com/ca/app/aroundme/id290051590?mt=8>

For Android devices, AroundMe is compatible with Android 2.2 or later.

Available at: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.tweakersoft.aroundme>

Kevo Bluetooth Enabled Deadbolt by Kwikset



This is a new product that allows people to use their iPhone as a key. The deadbolt uses Bluetooth technology to recognize your iPhone as you approach the door. To unlock the deadbolt, you tap it with your finger. This could be very useful for those who struggle with inserting a key and turning it.

Kevo is compatible with iPhones using iOS 6.0 and above (iPhone 4S, 5, 5C, 5S), but not with Android phones. The Kevo app is free to download from iTunes /App Store.

The hardware "Kevo Bluetooth Enabled Deadbolt by Kwikset" costs \$249.99 at HomeDepot and Best-Buy (Apr 3, 2014). The package also includes a FOB key for those who don't have an iPhone.

After installing the deadbolt, calibration is done with your iPhone Kevo App and the Fob.

The Kevo app also keeps a record of lock and unlock activity. The app can notify you when the door is locked or unlocked. You can authorize family members and friends to use their iPhones as keys too. The original owner can send, disable and delete other e-keys.

<https://itunes.apple.com/ca/app/kevo-your-phone-is-now-your-key/id685604951?mt=8>

Duolingo



Have you ever tried to learn a new language and couldn't follow through? "Practice every day" is the key to being successful! Duolingo is a free language-learning app that received many awards last year. This app allows you to practice a new language anywhere and anytime you can use your smartphone or tablet. It is compatible with all iOS devices (with iOS 6.0 and above) and Android phones (2.2 and above).

Duolingo offers six language courses: Spanish, French, German, Portuguese, Italian and English. The lessons are fun and designed like a game. You can also invite your friends to learn. When you reach a certain language skill level, Duolingo invites you to help with website text translation for organizations that pay for this service. This is a reason why this app is free to use.

Download for i-OS devices :
<https://itunes.apple.com/app/duolingo-learn-spanish-french/id570060128?mt=8>

Download for Android devices:
<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.duolingo> ●



Yes, I Accept Your Invitation To Join BCITS

The BC Association for Individualized Technology and Supports for People with Disabilities (BCITS)
Home of Provincial Respiratory Outreach Program (PROP) & Technology for Independent Living (TIL)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/Prov: _____ Postal Code: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Please Check One

- Membership for registered BCITS clients**
Please mail completed form to BCITS (the cost of postage constitutes your membership fee)
- Non-client membership fee**
Please mail completed form along with \$20.00 annual membership fee payable to BCITS.

Please mail this form along with any applicable membership fees to BCITS - The Home Of PROP and TIL, #103-366 E. Kent Ave S., Vancouver, BC V5X 4N6



Ventilators: Now and Beyond

BY PATRICK CHO

Respiratory support has improved drastically over the past several decades. A remarkable journey, considering that 70 years ago a patient requiring respiratory support was confined in an Iron Lung—a negative pressure stationary metal chamber. Currently, there are different brands and models of ventilators all around the world. Despite all the different modes, fancy graphs and shiny cases, they use positive pressure as the form of delivery. Modern day home ventilators are smaller, more versatile and portable thanks to the development of the microprocessor.

There are technologies right now that allow a client to breathe without a ventilator. A diaphragmatic pacing system (DPS) is a neuro-stimulation technology that sends a signal to tell the diaphragm to contract which allows the person to take a breath in. Unfortunately, this technology is not for everyone. The

DPS is intended for clients with a stable high spinal cord injury and a stimulatable diaphragm.

In the future, ventilators will integrate and connect with other monitoring devices. They will take this data and make supported decisions based on medical protocols and evidence based algorithms. Parameters such as volume, respiratory rate, flow, inspiration time and alarms will be adjusted in real time based on a user's status. The goal is to make the user feel more synchronous with the ventilator and provide the best therapy based on their current condition. These innovations look exciting on paper and I am looking forward to working with the next generation of ventilator.

Although ventilators are getting smarter, mechanical ventilators won't be replacing Respiratory Therapists anytime soon. ●