

# New Directions

**Summer 2021**

GUELPH  
Independent **LIVING**

Quarterly Agency Newsletter

[www.guelphindependentliving.org](http://www.guelphindependentliving.org)



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**PARALYMPIC GAMES**



The Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games will feature 22 sports.  
Athletes: 12,000+ | Venues: 12 | Events: 500+ | Countries: 160+ | Total: 17+ billion  
Sponsors: 100+ | Broadcasting: 100+ | Marketing: 100+ | Total: 100+ billion  
Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games | Official Paralympic Games | International Paralympic Committee  
Paralympic Games | International Paralympic Committee

Period of the Games: 24 August - 5 September 2021

## BOARD CHAIR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MESSAGE

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed life as we know it at Guelph Independent Living. Over the past 18 months, there has been changes to staffing levels, client schedules, Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) protocols, and the implementation of universal masking. Many of us will probably also say COVID has changed us individually, from our daily routines to our life goals and priorities.

If we continue to adhere to public health protocols, get vaccinated, and keep variants at bay, life promises to return to some form of normal. At that point, what lessons will we have learned and carry forward?

Here are some important lessons learned so far:

1. *Masks are useful*
2. *Telehealth may become the new normal*
3. *Vaccines are powerful tools*
4. *We need to take mental health seriously*
5. *We have the capacity for resiliency*
6. *Community is essential ... and so is technology*

Because our memory is often short, one might say that another major lesson from a public health perspective is to remember and recognize our history. 2020-2021 is a period we must remember in hopes that we do not live through a similar situation in the future.

Amid the challenges of the past year, GIL has had many accomplishments including utilization of our Pandemic Plan originally developed in 2009, our

new website compliant with Accessibility of Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), an upgraded computer system which facilitated working from home at just the right time, two new residential units at Willow Place, and preparation for our next Strategic Planning cycle.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and management team, we want to recognize the many individuals who have given of themselves to ensure the health and safety of our agency, employees, and clients during this unprecedented time in history.

Thank you to our clients for your understanding and flexibility with the quick and often drastic changes to service delivery. To our front-line employees, we are indebted to you for your compassion, hard work, and the sacrifices you made to care for and protect our clients. To our administration employees, thank you for your cooperation and willingness to help with whatever tasks were needed.

Lastly, thank you to the network of community partners, funders and donors who all support our agency's mission and commitment to deliver quality programs, housing, and supportive services.

Everyone's role is vital to our success.

*Cindy & Janet*

***“We may encounter many defeats but we must not be defeated”***

~ Maya Angelou



## 45TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

On June 22, 2021, Guelph Independent Living (GIL) hosted its Annual General Meeting via Zoom.

Management provided an overview of the agency's activities for the 2020-2021 fiscal year including highlights of: client support activities during the COVID pandemic, health human resources, Willow Place and financial reports. The Board of Directors approved the 2020-2021 audited financial statements for both the Health and Housing portfolios, appointed the auditors for 2021-2022, ratified all activities of the Board over the past year, and announced the Board Executive for the upcoming year.

Following the formal business portion, we congratulated two Board members resigning from GIL. Both Debbie Stanley and Nigel Smith brought a wealth of skills to the organization and will be greatly missed. Due to COVID-19, we did not present our employee

service awards in person; however, we acknowledged the achievements of the 14 employees receiving awards this year for 5 to 30 years of employment at GIL. Please see profiles of these dedicated and hard-working individuals below.

The Board of Directors for the 2021-2022 year were announced as follows:

- Cindy Kinnon – Chair
- Mike Greer – Vice-Chair
- Kala Flannery – Secretary & Treasurer
- Leslie Eckel - Director
- Pamela Polfuss-Schmidt - Director
- Lindsay Sieben - Director

## EMPLOYEE SERVICE AWARDS

***Congratulations to all of these employees, GIL extends many thanks for your hard work and dedication to the agency and clients.***

### **Krissia B, 5 Years**

Krissia has assisted in the Assisted Living, Outreach, and Seniors programs throughout her time at GIL. Currently she works as a casual employee, pitching in wherever she is needed. Congratulations on her 5 year service award, we truly appreciate her dedication.



### **Melissa T, 5 Years**

Melissa has been with the Outreach program since her first day at GIL in 2016. Currently she holds a part-time position on evenings providing consistent care to clients with her quiet nature. We look forward to our ongoing employment relationship with Melissa.



## EMPLOYEE SERVICE AWARDS CONT'D

### **Lisa L, 5 Years**

Congratulations to Lisa on 5 years of service at GIL. Lisa has a warm infectious smile and brings her sunny temperament to all that she does. Lisa gives her very best to the GIL clients she serves and to her coworkers within the Willow Place team.



### **Pamela S, 5 years**

Congratulations to Pamela on her 5 years of service. Pamela is dedicated to the health and welfare of the clients bringing her compassion and outgoing personality to every shift. She currently works in a casual role in the Willow Assisted Living program.



### **Jennifer F, 10 years**

Thank you for 10 years of dedicated service with GIL. Jen enjoys working in the Senior's program and is an active member of the Leisure program. Jen is known for her craft work, most recently the creation of her crocheted COVID creature. The clients, her coworkers, and Coordinator of the Seniors Assisted Living program cannot imagine the team without her empathy, care and creative skills.



### **Cherly V, 10 years**

Congratulations on 10 years of service with GIL. Cheryl created many imaginative activities during COVID lockdowns to keep the Dublin tenants engaged, and she supports the safety of her coworkers as a Back Mentor and JHSC member. She is a caring, compassionate, and dedicated worker that we are honoured to have on our Senior Support Worker team.



### **David B, 10 Years**

Congratulations to David on his 10 years as the Building Superintendent at Willow Place. Since he started in July 2010, David has put his knowledge of building systems and construction to valued use on a daily basis. Many thanks for his dedication and support to the Willow tenants and GIL.



### **Susan M, 10 Years**

Susan has been a valued member of the Outreach team since her first day with GIL. She is always willing to help, whether it be assisting with client care, training new workers, providing feedback, or sharing some wonderful baked goods at meetings. Susan has been involved with the JHSC throughout her tenure, most recently as an interim co-chair. Her years of service are a true testimony to her dedication to GIL; may she continue to inspire for years to come.



## EMPLOYEE SERVICE AWARDS CONT'D

### **Kirsten S, 10 Years**

Congratulations on 10 years of service with GIL. Kirsten is dedicated to the Grange tenants, and has been a positive constant during the COVID pandemic. She puts her heart and soul into everything she does including her work as an active JHSC member. GIL is fortunate to have Kirsten as part of our Senior Support Worker team.



### **Julita N, 25 Years**

Congratulations Julita on her 25 years of dedication and service to GIL! Julita is a quick witted worker with a big smile who can be counted on to bring her years of experience and knowledge to the table. Her dedication to the excellent provision of client care is truly to be admired.



### **Hushim T, 15 Years**

Congratulations Hushim on her 15 years of dedication and service to GIL. Hushim always brings her honesty, professional and compassionate self to her work. She is calm, patient, and thoughtful; a quiet leader within the evening team at Willow. The clients and coworkers are fortunate to have her as part of this program.



### **Terry M, 25 Years**

Congratulations Terry on her 25 years of dedication and service to GIL! She has served as the co-chair of the Joint Health and Safety Committee for many years, striving to create and maintain a safe work environment for her coworkers. Terry is proactive in bringing forward concerns to ensure client services are provided in a safe manner. Her wisdom and experience make her a valued anchor of the 87 Neeve team.



### **Sandy H, 20 Years**

Congratulations Sandy on her 15 years of dedication and service to GIL. Sandy is a warm and compassionate worker who always puts clients first. She has been an anchor to the Assisted Living night shift as well as worked within the Seniors and Outreach teams. Sandy may very well know every client at GIL.



### **Wanda O, 30 Years**

Wanda has been with GIL for over 30 years. She is very dedicated to the clients at 85 Neeve, even arranging vaccination appointments for almost every client in the program. Wanda kept focused on the clients' needs during the pandemic, recognizing the importance to keep interactions positive and upbeat. Her empathy and compassion for clients and coworkers is boundless; we are all fortunate to have worked with her over the past three decades.



# CHANGES TO OLD AGE SECURITY (OAS)

The Ontario government is increasing the OAS pension for seniors aged 75 and over as part of their Budget 2021. The increase will be implemented in two stages:

1. A taxable one-time payment of \$500.00 in August 2021 to those 75 and over as of June 30, 2022; and
2. A permanent 10% increase to the monthly OAS pension, beginning in July 2022.

The purpose of the one-time payment is to meet the immediate needs of OAS pensioners until the perma-

nent increase to their pension is implemented in July 2022. No action is required by seniors, who will automatically receive the payment if they are eligible.

You can find additional information at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/publicpensions/cpp/old-age-security/one-time-payment-older-seniors.html>

Additionally, in July 2021, the OAS benefit will automatically increase 1.3% for all seniors (65 and over), bringing the maximum monthly OAS pension amount to \$626.49, up from \$618.45.

# UPDATE - ELECTRONIC BALLOT MARKING

At the end of June, Guelph city council unanimously voted to have staff investigate the use of assistive technology to allow people to independently mark their ballot. A staff report on electronic ballot marking is expected to be ready by the end of 2021.

Lorelei Root, a member of the city's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) and chair of the election sub-committee which brought the idea forward, has been working tirelessly to implement electronic ballot marking for future elections.

*"Please just let me vote," she said. "I was already unable to vote independently in the last election due to the lack of accessible options, so asking me and other people like me to wait until 2026 for the right to vote just isn't ok."*

Council heard there are many Guelph residents for whom online voting, mail-in ballots as well as traditional in-person voting are options that do not allow for their vote to be cast independently, as they require help from others to mark and/or deliver their ballot to a mailbox.

In a 2017 report, Statistics Canada noted Guelph had 30,200 residents aged 15 and older who identified as having a disability, though that figure is not

broken down by the type of disability.

Electronic ballot marking is "nearly identical" to traditional mail-in voting, Root stated, explaining people could apply to receive a one-time electronic download code for their ballot, use their assistive technology to understand it and make their selection, before printing it out and mailing it in.

*"It's not online voting," she stressed, noting the physical ballot can be verified during a manual recount, which was the main concern raised about online voting during council's February discussions.*

*"Although we would be the first city in Canada to use this tech, which to me is exciting, it's far from new," Root said, adding this technology has been used in thousands of elections all over the world, including in the United States. "It's far from new ... it's tried and true."*

Some initial concerns with the concept have been raised, including potential issues with the voters list provided by the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation and differences in how voter eligibility is validated in other countries. Those differences could make it difficult to implement here.

For the full article: <https://www.guelphtoday>

## VACCINE CLINIC ON WHEELS

The Ontario government has partnered with Metrolinx to offer a new and convenient way for people to receive their COVID-19 vaccine.

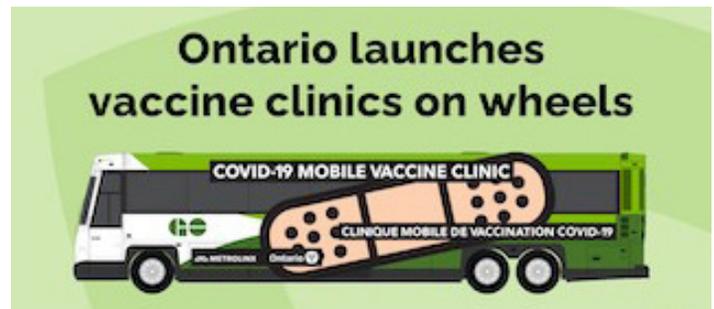
Two GO buses have been retrofitted to serve as mobile vaccine clinics to make it easier for those who have yet to receive their first or second dose.

*“This innovative partnership with Metrolinx will ensure Ontarians have even easier access to a first or second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine,”* said Solicitor General Sylvia Jones. *“By bringing vaccines directly to the people, we are helping more residents get the protection they need for themselves, their families and their communities.”*

The GO-VAXX buses will travel to malls, festivals, community hubs and events throughout the summer and fall across the Greater Golden Horseshoe Region. No appointments are needed, and anyone aged 12 and

over can get their first or second dose while supplies last. The mobile clinics are fully accessible and will be administering the Pfizer vaccine.

Each bus is expected to be on the road six days a week. The province will work with local Public Health units and municipalities to determine specific sites based on local data and needs. The GO-VAXX schedule can be found at [www.ontario.ca/vaccinebus](http://www.ontario.ca/vaccinebus) and will be updated weekly.



## NEW ONLINE RENEWAL TOOL FOR ACCESSIBLE PARKING PERMITS

Ontarians can now choose to renew a permanent Accessible Parking Permit, apply for a traveler’s permit or motorcycle decal, or request a change of address all by visiting [Ontario.ca/RenewAPP](http://Ontario.ca/RenewAPP).

Accessible Parking Permits can be renewed using a computer, tablet, or smartphone with the platform available 24/7. All that is required is an existing permit number and standard personal information. Once renewed online, the new permit will be sent by mail.

While this new option is quick, easy, and can be done from the comforts of home, Ontarians continue to have the option to renew by mail or in person at a Service Ontario outlet.



Additionally, over 40 of the most common Service Ontario transactions, such as driver’s licence and licence plate sticker renewals, are available 24/7 at [ServiceOntario.ca](http://ServiceOntario.ca).

*“Our government is committed to providing services that are accessible and inclusive for everyone,”* said Ross Romano, Minister of Government and Consumer Services. *“We are excited to be offering digital fulfillment for yet another category of transactions to Ontarians. It is my hope that bringing Accessible Parking Permit renewals online for the first time will make life easier and more convenient for seniors and individuals with accessibility needs.”*

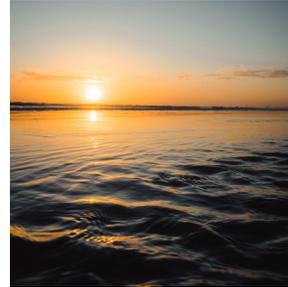
## CLIENT MEMORIALS



**Barbara Shields** – was a client in the 85 Neeve Seniors program since its inception. She passed away on Sunday May 23, 2021 at the age of 71 and is remembered by her sister and nephews.

Barb was a special person that could always brighten your day. She loved to partake in GIL's leisure programs, work on crafts, and spend time with her many friends and neighbours. Barb maintained a positive attitude, always with a smile and infectious laugh.

Thank you to Barb for sharing her kindness, fierce independence, and sense of humour with us. She will be missed by all who knew her.



**Gail Beerman** – was a client with GIL for a short period of time; first in the Outreach program and then 85 Neeve. She passed away in early July at the age of 87 and will be missed by her children, grandchildren, and many extended family members.

tended family members.

Although we did not have the opportunity to get to know Gail very well, we hope that the personal support services provided by our employees brought her comfort and support during the last year of her life.

## NEW CANADA DISABILITY BENEFIT

On June 22, 2021, the Government of Canada introduced new legislation that would establish a framework for a new Canadian Disability Benefit. It is a plan to ensure an inclusive recovery that “leaves no one behind”, said the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Carla Qualtrough. This new legislation is in response to the impacts the COVID-19 pandemic has made on Canadians with disabilities, and to address the long-standing inequities that lead to financial insecurity, hardships and social exclusion faced by persons with disabilities.

The Canada Disability Benefit would supplement, not replace, existing federal and provincial-territorial supports with a goal of lifting thousands of working-age Canadians with disabilities out of hardship.

In the spirit of “Nothing Without Us”, the Government of Canada will build on the legislation introduced

to engage with stakeholders and persons with disabilities to have their voices heard on the design of the benefit leading up to the development of regulations. Engagement has begun with the launch of the [Disability Inclusion Action Plan](#), a public survey that asks Canadians how the Government of Canada can build a barrier-free country. Additional activities will continue until the fall.

The legislation also recognizes the leading role that provinces and territories play in providing supports and services to Canadians with disabilities and the importance of engaging with them in developing income and other supports. Federal, Provincial and Territorial (FPT) Ministers responsible for Social Services and Disability intend to meet this summer for an initial discussion on the proposed new benefit.

## ILLUMINATE DOWNTOWN GUELPH



Illuminate Downtown Guelph is a colourful collection of outdoor lighting projects designed to brighten up our city center and highlight Guelph's unique architecture.

The Wellington Building, the County of Wellington Building (Old Post Office), Old Quebec Street Shoppes, the Guelph Civic Museum, and the covered bridge will be lit up at night now and again in the winter season with a relaunch of festive colours.

*“Launched in July 2021 and operating every night until Thanksgiving, this outdoor experience enables safe and accessible visits, and an opportunity for the community to connect with their city in a safe and captivating way,”* says a news release from the project's driving force, the Downtown Guelph Business Association (DGBA).

The DGBA partnered with lighting experts from Aligned Vision Group, part of the team that lit up the CN Tower, the Rainbow Bridge, and many historical buildings Ontario-wide.

*“Featuring remarkably preserved 19th century stone facades, a stunning art deco frontage, and a modern landmark, illumination is perfect for highlighting the exceptional architecture in Downtown Guelph.”*

To fully enjoy the tour and learn about the history of each site, download the free app, [Driftscape](#).

## WASAGA BEACH MOBI-MAT

Wasaga Beach, located along the southern end of Georgian Bay, is a great place to relax, enjoy the sun and create memories. The beach is accessible with two boardwalks located in the park at Beach Areas 1 and 2. The boardwalks are wheelchair and stroller accessible; however, please note the ramps off the boardwalk down to the beach are NOT accessible.

Mobi-Mats are now available at Beach Areas 2 through 6. These portable rollout mats provide a continuous pathway, enhancing access to the beach and water for pedestrians, visitors using wheelchairs, strollers, and bicycles.

In partnership with the Town of Wasaga Beach, the park also offers access to all-terrain wheelchairs as well as water accessible wheelchairs. These wheelchairs are available through the Park Office for a refundable deposit.

If you are looking for a daytime outing, Wasaga Beach might be a fun and accessible option.



## GUELPH MUSEUMS

Guelph Civic Museum and McCrae House National Historic Site have welcomed back visitors with safety protocols in place for new exhibitions and events. Advanced registration is required to visit museum sites; tickets can be booked at [guelphmuseums.ca](http://guelphmuseums.ca) or by calling 519-836-1221

Guelph Civic Museum is located at 52 Norfolk Street. McCrae House National Historic Site is located at 108 Water Street. Both buildings are physically accessible.

Events scheduled include:

1. **Rapid Response: Collecting Experiences as they are Lived is** on display until Feb. 27, 2022. The Guelph Civic Museum started collecting material related to the pandemic in April 2020. Following the June 2020 local demonstration in support of Black Lives Matters, Guelph Museums and the Guelph Black Heritage Society partnered to preserve stories and experiences of the global and local awakening to racial injustice. This exhibition features contemporary objects and personal expressions submitted by community members to document this historic time in Guelph.
2. **Bravo! Guelph Little Theatre Celebrates 85 Years** is on display until Dec 5, 2021. Guelph Little Theatre Celebrates 85 Years! This exhibition commemorates the creativity, engagement, and continuing legacy of Guelph's longest running community theatre. Enjoy behind-the-curtain peek through production photographs, recordings, costumes, and props.

### 3. **Outdoor patio concerts at the Civic Museum**

As follows:

#### **Guelph Chamber Choir**

August 27 @ 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Enjoy the choir's soul-stirring sounds through 40 years of recording and performance history.



#### **Royal Castles**

September 24 @ 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Hailing from Guelph, the 3-piece band deliver pounding drums, crunchy guitars, and a healthy dose of wooly bass.



### 4. **McCrae House Tea at Two**

Tea at Two runs daily at 2 pm Tuesday through Sunday until September 5. After touring McCrae House, visitors are invited to relax and reflect over tea and scones in the peaceful backyard gardens. The menu includes exclusively blended McCrae House teas, scones with whipped cream, jam, and berries for a cost of \$17+HST.

**Summer always ends with good memories**

## TOKYO 2020 PARALYMPIC GAMES

The Canadian Paralympic Committee has confirmed 128 athletes are heading to Japan for the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games, which will run from August 24 through September 5.

The team features a wide range of athletic talents with 26 previous medalists and 68 athletes returning from the Rio 2016 squad. The group is comprised of athletes from 11 provinces and territories and features 71 women and 57 men.

*“Canada’s Paralympians are absolute stars,”* Stephanie Dixon, the chef de mission of Canada’s Paralympic Team, said in a release. *“They are among the best athletes in the world, and I can’t wait for their incredible hard work, talent, dedication, and perseverance to be celebrated across Canada.”*

Returning individual athletes include:

- Karen Van Nest (Para archery), set to make her sixth Paralympic Games appearance, along with Patrice Simard (wheelchair rugby).
- Another six athletes are heading to their fifth Games, including Brent Lakatos (Para athletics) and Lauren Barwick (Para equestrian).
- Lakatos headlines the Canadian medalists, with seven to his name already. The Dorval, Quebec, native struggled with health issues in 2019 but secured two golds and one silver at the 2019

International Paralympic Committee world championships. Combined with his four golds at the 2017 worlds, Lakatos will be looking to add to his medal total in Tokyo.

- Aurelie Rivard (Para swimming) has five medals herself, the second-most of any Paralympian on the team. The 25-year-old from St-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Quebec, set four Canadian records enroute to winning three golds and one silver in Rio.

Canada will be competing in 18 different sports, striving to match their medal count in Rio, where the team won a total of 29 medals: eight gold, 10 silver and 11 bronze. Placing 14th overall.

Five teams are also going to Tokyo, including women’s goalball, women’s sitting volleyball, wheelchair rugby, women’s wheelchair basketball and men’s wheelchair basketball.

The roster also includes many new faces, with 55 athletes making their Paralympic debuts:

- At 17, Nicholas Bennett (Para swimming) will be the youngest member of the team. When he was 15, he won three gold and a silver at the 2019 Parapan American Games in Lima.
- Para badminton will be held for the first time in Tokyo, and Olivia Meier will be Canada’s first Paralympian in the sport.
- Jessica Tuomela of Sault Ste Marie, Ontario, is set to make her debut in the Para triathlon (previously Para swimming) while Lyne Tremblay of Magog, Quebec, will take part in Shooting Para sport (formerly Para archery).

The team will be assisted by 113 coaches and support staff.

For the full article visit: <https://www.cbc.ca/sports>



# FERGUS ROOTS OF PARALYMPIAN ANDERSON

Patrick Anderson, considered to be the best wheelchair basketball player in the world, will be playing in his fifth Paralympics later in August. His talents on and off the court have earned him international fame as a great role model and fabulous ambassador of the sport.

Anderson was born in Edmonton, Alberta but grew up in Fergus, Ontario. In 1989, at the age of nine, he was struck by a drunk driver and lost both of his legs below the knee. He discovered wheelchair basketball in 1990, and when he met Paralympians Jeff Penner and Bruce Russell, they encouraged him to try out for Team Canada.

*“Right from the very first weekend, they were planting stories in my head about playing for Team Canada someday, so the seed was planted early,”* Anderson said. *“They saw my long arms and short legs and saw a good basketball build so they started pumping my tires right from the get-go.”*

Although he now calls Brooklyn, NY his home, Anderson said he hasn’t forgotten how the Fergus community supported him and his family after the accident.

*“They just really provided a soft landing after that accident which set me up to bounce back and dis-*

*cover wheelchair basketball and run with it,”* Anderson said.

The pandemic posed some challenges, such as being stuck in his home in New York City, while the rest of the team was in Toronto training, but this gave Anderson an opportunity to focus on individual skill work. Anderson did say the full team had a great couple of weeks at training camp, also stating that the team probably benefited from the extra year of preparation, not necessarily skill-wise but the team culture appears stronger than ever.

*“The team is hungry, together, focused but we’re also kind of going in with our eyes open as something of an underdog,”* Anderson said in an interview from training camp in Toronto.

*“I think there’s a path for us to get a medal, but you know we’re gonna have to play great, not just once or twice but seven or eight times.”*

Anderson is focused on the upcoming games and living in the moment with his teammates as they embark on this amazing opportunity. The team left for Japan August 12 and play their first match on August 26.

For the full article visit: <https://www.guelphtoday>



## CREATIVE HAPPENINGS AT DUBLIN

To celebrate Lughnasadh, residents at Dublin learned how to weave with wheat and created some lovely crafts.

Lughnasadh is a Gaelic festival marking the beginning of the harvest season. Historically, it was widely observed throughout Ireland, Scotland, and the Isle of Man, usually held on the first of August, or about halfway between the summer solstice and autumn equinox.

The holiday honors the warrior god Lugh whose name means light or brightness in Gaelic. Festivities traditionally included horse racing, weapons contests, and athletic competitions, all which represented Lugh's many skills. He was also a poet, a blacksmith, sorcerer, crafter, and much more.



## USED POWER WHEELCHAIR AVAILABLE

An Invacare, model Arrow motorized wheel chair, with new batteries and a charger is being donated by generous member of the Guelph community. Please email [rowena@guelphindependentliving.org](mailto:rowena@guelphindependentliving.org) if interested. The seat is 18" wide, 20 " deep.



# HISTORY OF DISABILITY AND DISABILITY-RIGHTS

Joanne MacDonald and Mary Reid are long-time disability rights advocates who have formed the History of Disability Rights Newfoundland and Labrador. They formed the group to fill an emptiness in the province’s archives with the aim to collect and preserve materials about the history of disability and disability rights, as well as film interviews with notable activists, and eventually create an exhibit to showcase the collection.

MacDonald is a former elite wheelchair athlete. Her passionate advocacy efforts awarded her the Queen’s Golden Jubilee Medal and is an officer of the Order of Canada and Order of Newfoundland and Labrador. Reid is a former executive director of the Independent Living Resource Centre in St. John’s.

*“There’s been so much work done at a provincial and national level by many people here, and to not see any recognition at all was, like, ‘Wow.’”* said Joanne MacDonald

At one time, Newfoundland and Labrador was viewed as a national leader for disability rights (MacDonald and Reid say that’s not the case anymore). However, they noted it was the first province to go through de-institutionalization – the movement of people out of institutional settings and into independent living environments. And it was also the first province to implement building accessibility legislation.

They have been creating an extensive timeline of significant events dating as early as the 1800s, filming interviews with notable disability rights activists and collecting documents and photographs. Photographs include black and white photos of children with polio in rehabilitation at Sunshine Camp in the 1950s and 1960s, Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother smiling at a row of children using wheelchairs during her

1967 visit celebrating the Canadian Centennial.

Earlier entries in the group’s timeline are less joyous. An 1813 entry noted the St. John’s public hospital included a separate ward, well away from other patients, for people with disabilities. And that was considered an improvement over a time when “lunatics” were confined to miserable conditions in basements and jails.

*“To just think about the lives of people who happened to have a disability throughout those decades compared to today, and certainly there’s a long ways yet to go, but when we look at those changes – and know that a lot of those changes came about because of the activities and the passion of people with disabilities themselves in terms of pushing this along, and gathering and collaborating – we want to show that,”* said Reid.

*“Sadly, some people are passing away, memories are fading, and sometimes history gets rewritten, as well, and we don’t want that to happen,”* said MacDonald of her sense of urgency to complete the work.

The group will donate the collection to Memorial University’s Archives and Special Collections where it can be accessed by everyone, and filmed interviews will be available online.



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reported using at least one aid or assistive device.**

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