



Accessible Housing Society

Ramping Up!

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NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JOINS AHS

Hello friends!

I am so excited to be here at the Accessible Housing Society as the new Executive Director. My first official day was October 2nd, 2006 and I quickly embarked on a very steep learning curve. Thanks to the Board of Directors for having the confidence in my skills to have me join such a wonderful, dedicated organization.

So, now, just a bit about myself, as I am sure you are all wondering. I am a third generation Calgarian, with two adult children. In 2003, I graduated from Royal Roads University with a Graduate Certificate in Executive Coaching and also achieved my Registered Social Worker status the same year.

My experience in the charitable sector as an Executive Director goes back to 1996 and as a volunteer and board

member to 1984. During the last year I was contracting as an Interim Executive Director in two other organizations that work with persons with disabilities.

Currently AHS is in the final stages of formalizing our strategic plan and I am thrilled about our direction. AHS is a leading organization in not only affordable but accessible housing. We see the potential for significant growth in the Residential Assessment and Design program, the development of partnerships with more community organizations, and the opportunity to come together to educate and advocate for our target group of clients for more services, awareness and funding. Please join me and the rest of this magnificent team by supporting our efforts in any way you can. Together, we CAN make a difference! Feel free to drop by or give me a call anytime. I look forward to meeting each of you.



Alana Healy, RSW, CEC, new Executive Director of AHS

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Also New at AHS



Jason Yule,
Community Relations
Coordinator



Carrie Field,
Client Care Director

FAREWELL TO TOM KENNY



Tom Kenny

AHS said farewell to Tom Kenny this past September when he moved on from the Society. Tom was with AHS for over a year-and-a-half and accomplished numerous things during his tenure. Of note is his involvement in establishing the Housing and Care Committee, a collaboration of different agencies involved in housing for people with disabilities in Calgary. Tom also moved the Society closer towards long-term financial stability by paying off the mortgage of the six units AHS owns at McLaurin Village. The staff will likely appreciate Tom the most for ensuring that across-the-board raises were implemented for all at the beginning of this fiscal year!

The staff and board of AHS will miss Tom's great storytelling abilities and his calm, collected manner. We wish Tom well in his new position as Executive Director of the Prostate Cancer Institute!

In Memoriam

It is with sadness that AHS acknowledges the passing of two of our beloved employees:

Grace Kislanko

Jan. 7, 1947 – July 17, 2006

Grace was the Office Manager for AHS for 14 years.

Betty Barnes

Dec. 13, 1947 – Sept. 24, 2006

Betty was a care attendant at the Fourth Dimension group home and McLaurin Village for four years.

GLORIA Vazquez - 18 Years of Excellence for AHS



Gloria Vazquez

It's rare to see a care attendant who has worked for the same organization for 18 years and remarkable when the individual comes to work with the same

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STRATEGIC PLAN GETS FINAL APPROVAL

It's a go. With the approval of a three year Strategic Plan by the Board of Directors on December 11, 2006, the Accessible Housing Society is off and running with a clear path into the future.

The plan, which showcases a renewed value set, mission, vision and four strategic directions, is designed to improve organizational alignment and ensure AHS continues to move toward its goals and objectives strategically.

"Each of the four strategic directions outlined in the plan address the growing need for both affordable and accessible housing," says Alana Healy, Executive Director for AHS. "It is an extremely exciting time for everyone involved. The Strategic Plan provides our organization with a road map to achieve our future ambitions," adds Healy.

The plan's strategic directions seek to maximize program potential through the following:

- ◆ partnerships,
- ◆ increase housing opportunities for people with mobility issues,
- ◆ educate the community on the growing needs of AHS clients, and
- ◆ provide leadership to ensure organizational excellence.

The plan is to be achieved over the next three years by 2010.

Under each strategic direction, specific objectives to achieve these goals are outlined. The collaborative planning process, which was undertaken to develop the plan, is indicative of the team effort that will be required to ensure the plan is a success.

"It will take a concerted effort from everyone at AHS to see that we are successful in implementing our new strategies," says Healy. "I am confident that our dedicated team of professionals can make our plan a reality."

A BATHROOM FOR EVERYONE



by Alanna Thiessen, Occupational Therapist

Featured in *Renovations Magazine*, Winter 2004.

If you had to use a walker or wheelchair, could you get into your bathroom? Could you close the door once you were in? Could you access the sink, toilet, or tub?

Quite often, bathrooms are too small for any of us, let alone people using wheelchairs! Enlarging the space is worth considering to create a much more functional room with a spacious feeling. A careful assessment of adjacent spaces, existing walls, plumbing, heating ducts, and electrical wiring must be made to determine what modifications are possible at a reasonable cost. Accurate drawings are needed to show how the new design works and to get quotes from contractors. Like updating your wardrobe, it is sometimes possible to achieve dramatic improvements with simple, inexpensive alterations!

If it is just not possible to expand the bathroom, you could still consider making alterations within the existing space. This can result in improvements that, although may not be ideal, will allow wheelchair use. So, if you're planning to renovate your

bathroom and want to plan for reduced mobility in the future, what features should you consider?

The Accessible Housing Society's Residential Assessment and Design Program can assess the bathroom in your home to help decide what changes need to be made to meet your particular needs. Some general design considerations are outlined below. Most of the recommendations are for wheelchair use as this is the most difficult to accommodate. A bathroom designed for a person using a wheelchair will generally work very well for any other mobility difficulty such as needing to use a walker. And don't worry that your bathroom will look like something out of a medical institution - it can actually look great!

Door

Typical bathroom doors are too narrow to allow a wheelchair to pass through. Plus, they usually swing into the bathroom using needed maneuvering space. They can also pose a potential safety hazard: if someone falls against the closed door, it can be very difficult to rescue them. Widen the door to 36" if possible and consider a pocket door or swing the door out. Install a lever handle for easier turning.



Toilet

As we get older, the toilet seat seems to get lower! The standard seat height of 14" or 15" may become difficult to manage though higher toilets of 16", 17", or 18" are available. However, if a commode chair is ever used over the toilet, the higher height may not accommodate one. Therefore, we usually recommend installing a standard height toilet. If a higher height is required later on, a raised toilet seat can be used or a "toilevator", a 3-1/2" high molded plastic spacer, can be installed

(Continued on page 6)

AHS & JCI's "Wheelin' & Dealin'" Fun

By Natalie Arneri

On Saturday September 16th, AHS and Junior Chamber International (JCI) Calgary, hosted the first "Wheelin' & Dealin'" Fun Casino. The western themed event was held at Fort Calgary and saw over 70 people come out. As a first-time event, the evening was a success and raised over \$6,000. Winners from the fun casino topped off the night with tens of thousands, possibly millions, of dollars in fun money.

Upon entry, guests registered to receive their evening package (consisting of \$10,000 in fun money, drink tickets and an event program) and enter their name into a door prize draw. The Officer's Mess at Fort Calgary proved to be a perfect location with its old-time atmosphere, fantastic food and great staff.

Activities included "Diggin' for Gold", where the player had to dig through a treasure chest full of gold coins in the hopes of pulling a winning coin. "AHS & JCI's Roulette Wheel of Trivia" quizzed guests on their knowledge of both organizations. The president of JCI was in full cowgirl get-up and selling 50/50 tickets. If you encountered bad luck at the casino, the option was there to donate to AHS and JCI for more fun money that could get you back in the game!

The silent auction offered a large selection of items to suit everyone's taste and at the end of the night was



an astounding success. Some serious bidding wars started to develop!

Prizes were handed out to the best dressed cowpoke, the top three winners of the casino playoff, the door prize winner and, because no one had luck at digging the winning gold coins, the jewelry up for grabs was also raffled off. The winner of the 50/50 draw graciously donated the money back to AHS and JCI.

Stellar emceeing was provided by Donovan Deschner and authentic western entertainment was provided by Grant Hall on the piano and

Tommy Bridges on the guitar and microphone. Everyone was tapping their feet and singing along all night!

Thank you to everyone who

attended the event! The crowd was fun, the atmosphere was buzzing and the casino had people yelling in excitement. And best of all, everyone walked away a winner.

AHS would like to extend a HUGE thank you to JCI. The partnership that formed from this event proved a perfect match and everyone on the committee had fun planning the night. Thank you JCI!

If you missed this year's fun casino, stay tuned for details for next year.

AHS and JCI plan on expanding the event, wrangling in a bigger crowd and having an even more rootin', tootin' good time!



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THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING AHS & JCI

(A Bathroom for Everyone article continued from page 3)

under the base. A higher toilet is always an option but keep in mind that it may not work in the future.

Bathtub

As a person's mobility declines, so does one's ability to get in and out of the bathtub. Equipment such as bath seats and lifts, grab bars, and non-slip mats decrease the risk for falls and improve safety, though they won't be much help if you can't get over the tub rim! A shower may help to resolve this problem but may not completely depending on the height of the lip around the shower area.

If you are planning to install a shower, there are several considerations:

- ◆ Install a wheel-in or roll-in shower that doesn't have a lip around the edge, minimum 3'-0" x 5'-0", and ideally 5'-0" x

5'-0" to better accommodate a wheeled shower/commode chair.

- ◆ Slope the shower area gently to a center drain and install waterproof, non-slip flooring throughout the bathroom area to prevent water from infiltrating underneath.

- ◆ Avoid prefabricated tub surrounds as it is difficult if not impossible to install grab bars securely into the wall.

- ◆ Also avoid shower doors as these can limit maneuvering and transfer space, and can be awkward to manage when using a mobility aid.

- ◆ Provide a single-lever tap, pressure balanced/ temperature control, and an adjustable hand-held shower that will suit both seated and standing persons.

Continued in the next issue of Ramping Up!

	
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ACCESSIBLE HOUSING SOCIETY SERVICES

Housing Registry - To help you find wheelchair accessible rental housing in the city, please call Roy at 282-3373.

Residential Assessment and Design Program - To have your new or current housing situation evaluated for plans or renovations to achieve greater mobility, please call Alanna, Alan or Sue at 282-1872.

Personal Care Services - To access the personal care provided at three locations in Calgary, please call 282-1872.

Library Services - To research a mobility solution, please feel free to browse our resource library.

Barrier-Free Design Workshops - Call AHS at 282-1872 to arrange a workshop for your group.

FUNDING

Did you know that there are programs out there that may assist you financially if you need to renovate your home to improve accessibility? Each of the following programs has specific eligibility requirements. To determine your eligibility, call the individual program or call AHS at 282-1872.

- ◆ **Residential Access Modification Program (RAMP):** through Alberta Seniors, 310-0000, then enter (780) 427-5760
- ◆ **Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP):** through CMHC, (403) 515-3000
- ◆ **Home Adaptations for Senior's Independence (HASI):** through CMHC, (403) 515-3000
- ◆ **Alberta Easter Seals:** equipment only, (403) 235-5662

(Gloria Vazquez story continued from page 2)

enthusiasm and positive attitude they originally brought to the job.

Gloria Vazquez has worked for Accessible Housing Society at the Fourth Dimension group home since 1989 when she graduated from Alberta Vocational Centre as a Certified Care Attendant (CCA).

This remarkable woman came to Canada from El Salvador with her husband and family of four young children aged 7-13.

It was a difficult adjustment for these medical professionals to make. Gloria, a nurse in charge of a small hospital, and her husband, a doctor for his town and the surrounding area, were forced to come to a country where language was a barrier to working in their chosen fields. Unable to make the adjustment to life as a laborer,

Gloria's husband returned home where he faced possible imprisonment or death and a life of uncertainty. Gloria, fearing for her family, stayed in the safety of Calgary determined to somehow make a new life for them.

When offered the opportunity to take the newly created CCA (Certified Care Attendant) program she immediately said yes and never looked back.

Gloria's colleagues have high praise for their personable co-worker saying Gloria has superior observation skills, is a real team player, is reliable, loves to laugh and always brings professionalism to the workplace.

Her greatest compliment is that the residents appreciate the little "Spanish Woman" who may not always get their names right but always provides meticulous care!

EASE THE TAX BITE - DONATE SECURITIES

Did you know that Canada's tax incentives for charitable donations are designed to make it easier for you to support your favourite charities? Are you aware that a recent change in the May 2, 2006 **federal budget has further improved the tax benefits for donating shares and certain other assets?** If not, then it may be worth your time to continue reading.

Both during your lifetime and on your death, you can donate property to a charity as an alternative to money. These donations are referred to as "gifts in kind" and can include property such as shares, artwork, real estate or life insurance. Gifts in kind are normally appraised at their fair market value.

The same method to determine the value of a tax credit for a gift in kind is used for a cash donation. The tax credit is generally worth about 46% of the value of the property. However, since you are deemed to have disposed of the property at its fair market value, you typically must recognize any capital gain or income that would result had you sold the property for that price.

As a result of the 2006 federal budget, individuals and corporations who donate securities listed on prescribed stock exchanges, mutual funds and segregated funds of life insurance companies to charities (other than private foundations) on or after May 2, 2006, do not have to include any portion of the resulting capital gain in their income. For such donations before that date, the donor had to include 25% of the resulting gain.

Donating securities can therefore produce higher net tax savings than selling the same securities and donating the proceeds. For more details on how to donate securities to a charitable organization, please contact your personal financial advisor or visit www.kpmg.ca/en/services/tax.

For information on donating securities to AHS contact Robyn at 282-1872 or robyn@ahscalgary.ca.



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 COMMITTEE:
 Helen Rojek - Editor
 Brooke Clibbon
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4D Resident Greg McMeekin Wins Top Award

Accessible Housing Society (AHS) board member and 4th Dimension Group Home resident Greg McMeekin, received high honours this past September. He joined the ranks of numerous other Calgarians as one of Calgary Inc. magazine's "Top 40 Under 40"!



AHS nominated Greg because of his commitment

to our organization and to raising awareness of issues for people with disabilities in our city and throughout the province through his work in other groups such as Access Calgary and the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

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