

BACKGROUND

THE ABILITY SOCIETY and FRIENDS

Since 1979 the Ability Society has been a community-based nonprofit agency. By providing a range of services from information requests, skill and needs assessments and employment programs, to assistive device recommendations, the Ability Society has opened the door to a world of opportunity for persons with special needs and their families.

Founded in 1979 by parents of children with cerebral palsy, the original programs were housed at the Alberta Children's Hospital. Although it began with providing programs and services to children with special needs and their families, it soon became apparent there was a need to assist adults with special needs as well. Soon thereafter, programs and services were expanded to assist Canadians in need nationally. In 1984, it was official. The idea had grown and took on a nonprofit, charitable organization, status. It was called the Technical Resource Centre. With a vision that continued to expand, 1998 saw a name change to the "Ability Society" and in the spring of 2000 an office in Duncan, British Columbia was opened. To date The United Way is the Ability Society's only core funder.

In the spirit of serving not only children and adults with special needs and seniors, but all citizens...the Ability Society grows again. The focus has always been on empowering community members to become active participants in 'life' and the launch of **Friends** is the next phase of that vision. As **Friends** expands most of the programs and services, with the exception of clinical program offerings, will fall within the **Friends** movement. By far this is the most exciting endeavour...

The Ability Society Mission Statement

The Ability Society is committed to enhancing the lives of people with any type of special need, in any age group, by providing information, education and access to advanced technology.

Clinical Programs & Services

In keeping with the Ability Society's original programs, we are pleased to offer:

Tech Tots/Early Birds Preschool Program:

Tech Tots is a unique ECS program providing quality education to children aged 2.5 to 6 years with moderate to severe special needs. It provides:

- Individualized one-to-one instruction in the child's home or community based daycare/preschool
- Special emphasis on the development of augmentative (non-verbal) communication skills
- Assistive Technology to promote learning and independence (adaptive toys, communication devices with speech output, adapted computer systems and early environmental control systems)

- Support from a team of consultants including a Special Education Teacher, Speech-Language Pathologist, Occupational Therapist and Physical Therapist
- Parents/guardians the opportunity to be active participant's in their child's program

VoiceAbility

VoiceAbility is a voice-recognition training program for adults with special needs. It is designed to teach individuals how to use voice recognition software for purposes such as education, employment, volunteerism or leisure.

Assessment, Training and Education Services

Through personal assessments, the Ability Society works one-on-one to offer persons with special needs and seniors computer access options, augmentative communication devices, toys, environmental controls, alternate power mobility and switches. Due to the challenge travel can pose to those with special needs, our clinical staff can provide in-home service or services at local community venues.

Equipment Lending Library

After we have determined what assistive devices will be most useful through an assessment, the Ability Society will make recommendations for assistive technology based on individual needs. Assistive technology is any device that allows an individual to accomplish a task independently. Clients are able to borrow this equipment to ensure the recommendations are appropriate.

The Ability Society lending library contains thousands of assistive devices that can enhance lives in the following main areas:

- Computer access
- Augmentative communication
- Adapted toys
- Environmental controls
- Alternate power mobility
- Switches
- Sport and recreational equipment

Friends

Friends is a movement and the next phase of our development as an entrepreneurial nonprofit.

Friends is an innovative, boundary-less, initiative that connects people, inspires caring and compassion, and builds community in everyday life. By engaging a diverse range of individuals and groups in relationships, **Friends** creates a reciprocal 'win' leading to social change. Based on an entrepreneurial model, **Friends** develops partnerships with social investors that are unique to the nonprofit sector and provides highly visible and measurable returns on investment. For all those committed to improving the society we share, **Friends** aims to be of support and a resource for information.

Friends Mission Statement

Friends inspires connection, builds community, and drives social change.

Friends Vision Statement

A caring community, a caring world...one friendship at a time.

The Initiatives, Specialized Programs & Services and Exciting Events for Friends are:

Children's Resource Centre

The Children's Resource Centre is a new facility that provides information and resources for adaptive play, recreation, purposeful play, hobbies and the arts.

This is a no cost facility and is available to children of all ages (including those cognitively under the age of 18), with any type of special need. A variety of adaptive toys, recreational equipment, sport and diversionary activities will be accessible for loan through the agency's equipment lending library.

ComputAbility

ComputAbility is a volunteer-driven program that provides an opportunity for persons with special needs and seniors to develop computer skills that will assist them in pursuing education, employment, volunteerism or special interests. The program is available to persons of all special needs in any age group, at no cost. Individuals are matched to a qualified volunteer tutor who provides one-on-one goal oriented computer training for a minimum of one hour per week.

Fundraising Initiatives/Special Events

Each year the Ability Society runs a number of exciting fundraising events that raise awareness of the needs of people within our community, provide opportunity for contribution and recognition of those who contribute so generously.

With **Friends** we are excited to up the anti... Not only will **Friends** be celebrating the relationships we develop with community, corporate and other nonprofit citizens, but also we will be developing intriguing, fun, community initiatives to ensure we all have the chance to be **Friends**. Watch for upcoming events like:

- Calgary Wave Days – bringing back that 'friendly' wave into the busy traffic lane
- Greet Your Neighbour Days – encouraging you to do more than just wave
- And many, many more...