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Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario

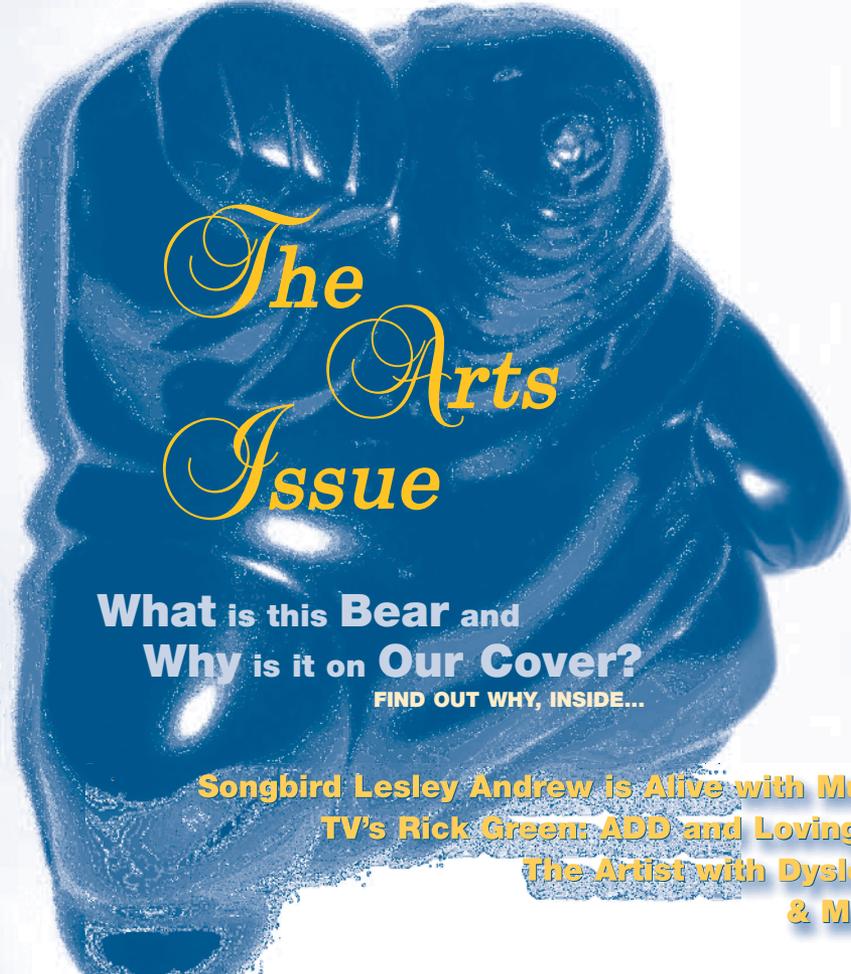
*A different way of learning  
can lead to success.*

VOLUME 40 NUMBER 1

SPRING/SUMMER 2009

# communiqué

THE PUBLICATION OF THE LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO



## *The Arts Issue*

**What is this Bear and  
Why is it on Our Cover?**

**FIND OUT WHY, INSIDE...**

**Songbird Lesley Andrew is Alive with Music  
TV's Rick Green: ADD and Loving It?  
The Artist with Dyslexia  
& More!**

**Cogmed For Adults • Overcoming Procrastination • Mindfulness Program in Jeopardy**

# communiqué

THE PUBLICATION OF THE LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO

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This issue presents a cavalcade of artists from across Ontario, who despite, or maybe because of, their LDs/ADHD are helping make the world a bit more of a beautiful place. From Ottawa to Sarnia, they're all here. *Sheri Cohen* and Tman discover life after ALDER • **Richmond Hill** writer *Michel Flannery* flits with the literary angels • **Stratford** actress and singer *Leslie Andrew* says "Go Big or Go Home" • **Stitch and Glitch:** **Ottawa** quilter *Jenniferann Heward-Eastham* • **Sarnia** artist *Jeffrey Rafuse* grins and bears it for contributor *Annie Sheehan* • **Television's Rick Green** is ADD and Loving It? • **London** artist *Dylan Lee*, tells Tracy Fawdry that image is everything • **Shout Outs:** Musical voyages with *Nader Khan* and **These Three Cities** and *Marion Boddy-Evans* on The Artist With Dyslexia

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**Communiqué**, the publication of LDAO is published twice-yearly. Articles should be submitted to editor Carter Hammett ([carterh@ldao.ca](mailto:carterh@ldao.ca)) approximately six weeks before the publication date. **Content deadline for the Fall / Winter issue is September 10, 2009.** Communiqué reserves the right to edit submissions for clarity, length and accuracy. Advertising rates available upon request. Subscription rate for non-LDAO members is \$25.00 yearly.

**Communiqué** provides a forum for information, news and opinions relevant to the field of learning disabilities. The Association does not, in any sense, endorse opinions expressed or methods or programs mentioned. Articles may be reprinted unless otherwise stated. Please mention "**LDAO Communiqué**" and the article's author if and when articles are reprinted.

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## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

### Art is a Verb



Carter Hammett, Editor

“I always thought art was a verb,” the most famous widow in the world once said. Yes, *that* widow. I mean Yoko Ono, wife of the late, great Beatle John Lennon. Whatever you may think of all the old arguments against Yoko—the primal screams, daring, as an Asian woman to fall in love with John Lennon 40 years ago, the Beatles break up—they are mostly old stuff. And while the jury may still be out on her artistic and musical legacies, there’s no denying that Yoko’s suddenly hip again. Four years ago a remixed version of her song, “Walking on Thin Ice” hit Number 1 on the dance charts, as have several updated versions of old songs, which are now being rediscovered by a whole new legion of club kids. And there can be no denying that with works like the recent “Wishing Tree” and “Play it By Trust” that Ono can claim a legitimate place as a pioneer in both performance art and installations.

Still, Ono, like many people with learning disabilities, has always felt like an outsider looking in. There’s a famous and expanding list of well-known artists with LDs, including designer Tommy Hilffiger, multimedia artist Robert Rauschenberg and others like Chuck Close and MacKenzie Thorpe, who have spoken out in recent years about their difficulties with learning. They join a well-

known group of people that includes Henry Winkler, Cher, Orlando Bloom, Justin Timberlake, Salma Hayek, Kiera Knightley and others who continue to speak out about learning disabilities.

With that in mind, we decided to issue an invitation to our chapters across the province and have them submit names of working artists in their communities. Some, like television’s Rick Green and Stratford’s Leslie Andrew are well-known to Canadian audiences. Others, like Ottawa quilter Jenniferann Heward Eastham or London artist Dylan Lee, or our cover artist this issue, Sarnia’s Jeff Rafuse may not be well-known, but for them, LDs have provided a gift enabling them to meet their inner artist and explore ways of seeing the world differently. For some, it is a way of making sense of their environment. For others, it’s a way of being on the inside, looking out, rather than the opposite.

In that way, they are similar to Yoko, who, four decades ago was greeted with unjust racist and sexist responses that seem shocking today. This issue celebrates the artist looking in, and the explorer looking out. We hope you enjoy it and are maybe inspired enough to get your creative on!

Carter Hammett, *Editor*

## CONTRIBUTORS THIS ISSUE

**Marion Boddy-Evans** is an artist, writer, and photographer based on the Isle of Skye in Scotland. She is the painting host for About.com • **Tracy Fawdry** is Executive Director of LDA London Region • **Michel Flannery** is a budding writer living in Richmond Hill • **Howell Gotlieb** is a senior psychological associate at JVS Toronto • **Deanne Repich** - is the creator of the Conquer Anxiety Success

Program, and publisher of the *Anxiety-Free Living* printed Newsletter for anxiety sufferers. She is a Member of the Anxiety Disorders Association of America. Visit her web site at: [www.conqueranxiety.com](http://www.conqueranxiety.com) • **Annie Sheehan** is Executive Director of LDA Lambton County

## LDAO AND LD NEWS

# Message from the LDAO Chair and Executive Director

The theme of this issue of *Communiqué* takes a look at the arts and their relationship to learning. Although this message is from both Pam Howard and myself I must declare my own bias when it comes to a belief in the arts and learning. I focused my Master's thesis on the arts, specifically movement and dance, and their effect on children with autism. I worked with both individuals and groups at the Spurwink School in Portland, Maine. It was 1981. In brief let me just say that I am a believer.

There have been numerous studies demonstrating the benefits of the arts to academic learning, increased self-confidence and social development to name just a few. Yet strangely we have seen a gradual but serious decline in the availability and quality of arts education in schools. As a result, we may be missing an opportunity to enrich students' lives, as well as their ability to achieve success in academics, to communicate and to express their feelings. Particularly for children (and adults) with learning challenges, the arts offer enormous potential for alternative learning and expression, and for ways and means to process information, to develop strategic and abstract thought and to interact in positive creative ways with their peers.



Maggie Wygant



Pam Howard

Research cited in *Critical Evidence: How the Arts Benefit Student Achievement, 2006* by the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies compiled the findings of several studies. One very interesting finding demonstrated that the visual arts helped boys in special education become more sophisticated and less reluctant readers. Others included the strong relationship between drama and the development of literacy skills among young children, and that participation in dance by juvenile offenders helped their tolerance, confidence and persistence.

We will leave it to the experts to discuss this concept in a future issue. In the meantime here is some food for thought:

*There is an artist imprisoned in each one of us.  
Let the artist loose to spread joy everywhere.*

- Bertrand Russell

**Pam Howard, Chair**      **Maggie Wygant, Executive Director**

## Learning Disabilities Association of Canada Launches Youth Website

The Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (LDAC) recently launched [www.youth2youth.ca](http://www.youth2youth.ca), a new website for students with learning disabilities. The website is an invaluable tool for guidance counsellors, teachers, advisors and students with learning disabilities.

[www.youth2youth.ca](http://www.youth2youth.ca) provides students who have learning disabilities with the information they need to achieve success in their education and work lives, said Judy Kerr, Executive Director of The Learning Disabilities Association of Canada. The website helps students with LD understand their learning profiles. It also provides strategies for them to communicate their learning needs, so they can obtain the necessary accommodations and supports.

The website development was based on input from students with learning disabilities from across Canada. Focus groups were comprised of students with learning disabilities at University of British Columbia in Vancouver, St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, Carleton University in Ottawa, Athabasca University in Alberta, and Cambrian College in Sudbury, Ontario.

[www.YouthToYouth.ca](http://www.YouthToYouth.ca) is accessible and offers support such as BrowseAloud, invaluable reading software for those with reading disabilities. The website has 3 main sections:

- Getting Here - Explores the challenges that students with learning disabilities face in preparing for post-secondary studies.
- Being Here - Examines their strategies for adapting to post-secondary life.
- Moving On - Explains the next steps in making the transition to work life.

\* Funded in part by the Government of Canada's Social Development Partnerships Program, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, and through generous donations from LDAC's supporters, [youth2youth.ca](http://youth2youth.ca) is a friendly meeting place for youth with LDs to share experiences and learn best practices for dealing with life at post-secondary institutions or in the workplace.

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## HOTWEB:

Special needs educator Meredith G. Warshaw has done an exceptional job of compiling resources for gifted kids with various learning challenges, including

LDs. The reliable information out there on giftedness and LDs is rare indeed, but this resource offers a lot of good information for those interested in this. Giftedness affects about 2-5% of those with learning disabilities, and can be just as much a hindrance as the LDs can.

This site is named after the book *Uniquely Gifted: Identifying*

*and Meeting the Needs of the Twice-Exceptional Student*, edited by Kiesa Kay. Twice-exceptional children (that is, intellectually gifted children with special needs such as AD/HD, learning disabilities, Asperger Syndrome, etc.) have a hard time of it in our education system - because their giftedness can mask their special needs, and their special needs hide their giftedness, they are often labelled as "lazy", "unmotivated", "not trying". Many people don't even realize that a child can be both gifted and have learning disabilities; however, Linda Silverman, Ph.D., the director of the Gifted Development Center has found that fully 1/6 of the gifted children tested at the GDC have a learning difference of some type.

For more information, visit: <http://www.uniquelygifted.org/>

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## SHELF LIFE:

### Two Valuable New Resources for People Working with Students Who Have Learning Disabilities

**Special Education Handbook: A Practical Guide for All Teachers (2007)** was produced for classroom teachers, occasional teachers, and special education teachers by the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO). It provides an overview of special education in Ontario and practical strategies for 34 Areas of Need that might be part of a student's Individual Education Plan. For each Area of Need (e.g. Organizational Skills, Memory) there is a chart which lists Indicators, Instructional Strategies, Environmental Strategies, and Assessment Strategies.

Special Education Handbook: A Practical Guide for All Teachers can be ordered from the ETFO website, for \$15:

<http://shopetfo.etfo.ca/index.aspx?ItemBasisID=995&IndexID=9>.

**The LD Resource Guide (2008)** was produced by the College Committee on Disability Issues (CCDI) for use by anyone working with postsecondary students or other adults with learning disabilities. It looks at 13 psychological processes (e.g. Executive Functioning, Expressive Language), and 9 different skill areas, and for each of these there is a chart listing Accommodations, Learning Strategies, Assistive Technology and ideas for Universal Design for Instruction.

The LD Resource Guide can be downloaded for free from the CCDI website:

<http://www.disabilityissues.ca/documents/LDResour.pdf>

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Lesra Martin

## LESRA MARTIN Wows 'Em at Learning and Leadership Breakfast

All eyes were upon legendary lawyer Lesra Martin February 25 at LDAO's Second Annual Learning and Leadership Corporate Breakfast.

Martin, who was illiterate until age 16, gained fame as part of the team who helped free legendary boxer Reuben "Hurricane" Carter, who had been

falsely accused of murder and kept in jail for almost three decades. The story became a *cause celebre* in Hollywood and in the media, finally immortalized in Norman Jewison's 1999 film *Hurricane*, which

starred Denzel Washington and became a major contender during that year's Academy Awards.

Martin kept the audience of 300 engaged in a punchy, inspiring speech, "Showing the Way of the Power of One," which was held at the Royal York Hotel.

LDAO gratefully acknowledges the sponsorship of Corus Entertainment, Scotiabank, C.J. Digital Media, and a host of others, which can be found in the Donors and Sponsors section of this issue of *Communiqué*.

We'll be featuring a full-length article on the event in our next issue, watch for it!

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# THIS JUST IN MINDFULNESS PROGRAM JEOPARDIZED

**H**owls of protest have greeted a Toronto hospital's decision to close down a much-loved and lauded relaxation program.

The Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program at St. Joseph's Health Care Centre is the largest hospital-based stress reduction program in Canada. Developed by Jon Kabat-Zin, author of *Full Catastrophe Living*, and a doctor at The University of Massachusetts, the ten-week, evidence-based, doctor supervised program has benefitted thousands of people over the years, including many with ADHD, anxiety and various learning disabilities.

"I feel like MBSR saved my life" says Sheri Cohen, who graduated from the program in 2003. By bringing in mindfulness into my life, it allowed me to identify what was emotionally reactive and see my anxiety for what it was. . It shows people how to live their lives in a meaningful way."

In January of this year, a study published in *Current Issues in Education*, suggested that Transcendental Meditation may be an effective way to treat ADHD symptoms without using medication. The pilot study followed a group of middle school students with ADHD who were meditating twice a day in school. After three months, researchers found over 50 percent reduction in stress and anxiety and improvements in ADHD symptoms. While not based on Kabat-Zin's program, the study clearly relayed the



Sheri Cohen

benefits of responsibly-used, non-medical interventions like meditation on difficult-to-serve populations.

However, the hospital has stated that because St. Joseph's is an acute care centre, the hospital has decided to focus on providing acute care services during uncertain economic times.

As of this writing, St. Joseph is the only medical facility in Toronto that intends on shutting down its MBSR program. Other facilities do offer it. However, the program has become an integral part of the community in the city's west end, innumerable changing lives that have experienced it. An organizing committee has been struck to advocate keeping the program and letters are being sent to David Caplan and others. To find out more contact friends\_of\_northwood@yahoo.com

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## Genetics of Reading Disabilities Study at the Hospital for Sick Children

Abundant evidence suggests that reading disabilities run in families, and that both genetic and environmental factors influence the predisposition to having reading problems. The aim of this study is to identify genes that may contribute to reading disabilities by examining genes that are thought to be involved in the biological basis of reading. We will also investigate the genetics of associated skills including language, spelling, math, attention, and working memory.

One full day of psycho-educational testing for the child will take place at the Hospital for Sick Children. Parents will receive a report describing their child's test results which may be helpful in guiding the child's current or future educational planning. A small blood sample is taken from parents and child.

Results from the study may improve the understanding of how and what genes are involved in reading disabilities. The research is funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

For more information, contact Tasha Carter at 416-813-8207 or email her at [tasha.carter@sickkids.ca](mailto:tasha.carter@sickkids.ca)

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## Is Reading Disability Research Reaching its Intended Targets?

If you are an elementary school teacher in Ontario, you are invited to respond to a survey about the accessibility and use of research on reading disabilities. To what extent is research on identifying and instructing students who are at risk for reading disabilities available to teachers? To what extent can the research be used, and what are the obstacles to research use?

You can provide insight toward understanding the degree to which there is a divide between available research on reading disabilities and its use, reasons for a divide, and how a divide could be bridged.

Connect to the on-line survey at <http://www.edu.uwo.ca/readingdisabilities/>. Please read the letter of information on the first page before beginning the survey.

This survey will be open from March 2, 2009 to June 1, 2009.

If you prefer a hard copy of the survey questionnaire, please request one from the researcher and provide your mailing address. A paper format will be sent to you with a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

For additional information and results contact: Katherine Davidson at [kdavids4@uwo.ca](mailto:kdavids4@uwo.ca) or Dr. Elizabeth Nowicki at [enowick2@uwo.ca](mailto:enowick2@uwo.ca)

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# Remembering Karen Wilkinson



Karen Wilkinson

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Karen Wilkinson on November 15, 2008 after a brave battle with cancer. As manager of JVS Toronto's Project GOLD (Generating Opportunities for Learning Disabilities), Karen will be remembered for her boundless energy and deep commitment to helping people with learning disabilities. With Karen's direction and support, countless

Project Gold clients found and maintained meaningful employment. Karen also played an instrumental role in facilitating the transition of Project GOLD from ALDER to The Learning Disabilities (LD) Centre at JVS Toronto in April 2008. A passionate community worker, Karen brought professionalism, integrity and bountiful laughter to everyone she touched and every project she handled. She will be deeply missed by all who knew her. LDAO extends its sympathies to Karen's family and many friends. JVS Toronto has established the Karen Wilkinson Memorial Award to recognize a JVS staff person who has demonstrated excellent work with clients with disabilities or barriers to employment.

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## BRAIN PROTEIN COULD OPEN DOOR FOR LD MEDICATION

A February 24 story in *The Globe and Mail* reported on an eight-year Canadian study linking a brain protein with ability to learn, which raised the possibility of correcting LDs with a drug.

The study, which was published in PLoS Biology linked Neto1, a crucial brain protein that helps brain cells communicate with each other, and results in learning impairments when missing or malfunctioning. The study also indicated that a medication being tested on Alzheimer's patients may one day be able to address the issue.

The study carries some caveats. For example, the study limited its research to mice, and it is still uncertain how the results of

these studies will translate to humans. Furthermore, it remains unknown if researchers will attempt to try an Alzheimer's medication, currently in safety trials, on people with LDs.

However, the research is part of growing evidence that through the life-long ability to make new brain cells and advances in genetics, it may be possible to reverse neuro-developmental disorders once thought beyond the reach of medicine.

Barbara McElgunn, Health Policy Advisor to LDA of Canada, remarked "It sounds very positive and hopeful for kids with learning disabilities, even though, of course, this is in its early days."

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## Registered Disability Savings Plan

*The Toronto Star* reported that on Dec. 1, 2008 the federal government introduced the RDSP - **Registered Disability Savings Plan**. By opening and contributing to an RDSP in 2008, you may be eligible to receive up to \$4,500 in Canada Disability Savings Grants and Canada Disability Savings Bonds. The deadline for 2008 contributions was extended to March 2, 2009.

Visit the "News, Views and Opportunities" section on the homepage of the Abilities website <http://www.abilities.ca> for RDSP developments. Excellent information on the RDSP is also available from <http://www.rdsp.com>. This website was established by Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network (PLAN), a non-profit organization, established in 1989 by and for families committed to future planning and securing a good life for their relative with a disability.

Ottawa estimates 280,000 Canadians would be eligible to open RDSPs, which will allow parents and siblings of disabled people to accumulate money on a tax-sheltered basis. Ottawa will provide matching grants of up to \$3,500 per year for the plans, which will have a lifetime limit of \$200,000.

The government – which first proposed the RDSP in its March, 2007 budget – will also deposit an additional bond of up to \$1,000 per year in the RDSP for families with annual incomes less than \$37,885.

**The 2009 RDSP contribution year began March 3.**

For additional information please visit: [www.rdsp.com](http://www.rdsp.com)

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# ELSEWHERE



## Bits & Pieces of LD News Collected from Around the World

### USA

#### Hyperactivity hinders quitting

Smokers with ADHD may find it harder to quit smoking. Researchers at Columbia University Medical Center in New York found in a study that people who had hyperactivity and impulsivity—two of the traits associated with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADHD) were less likely to successfully quit smoking than those without these traits.

The study involved 583 adult smokers, of whom 43 had ADHD. During the eight weeks of the study, participants were treated with Zyban (a drug that aids in smoking cessation) as well as the nicotine patch and cessation counselling.

After eight weeks, those with elevated hyperactivity and impulsivity showed lower quit rates. Inattention, another trait involved in ADHD, was not a factor in success rates.

*Celia Milne, Metro Canada, Feb. 3*

#### Phelps Gets Bonged by USA Swimming

Michael Phelps has been suspended for three months by USA Swimming after the whole bong thing.

The organization has cut off financial support to Phelps, who has ADHD, for the three months as well.

USA Swimming said, "This is not a situation where any anti-doping rule was violated, but we decided to send a strong message to Michael because he disappointed so many people, particularly the hundreds of thousands of USA Swimming member kids who look up to him as a role model and a hero."

Phelps won't fight the punishment.

*TMZ.com, Feb.5*

#### Nearly 8 percent of major-leaguers have ADHD according to league drug reports

Major-league baseball apparently suffers from what one doctor calls an "epidemic" of Attention Deficit Disorder. The league granted nearly 8 percent of its players a medical exemption for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in the 2008 season.

That's up from a year ago and according to a committee member for the World Anti-Doping Agency a "quite spectacular" number.

"There seems to be an epidemic in major-league baseball," said Gary Wadler, chairman of the committee that determines the banned substances list for the agency. "I've been in private practice for a lot of years. I can count on one hand the number of individuals that have ADD.

"To say that close to 10 percent of major-league baseball players have Attention Deficit Disorder is crying out for an explanation. It is to me, as an internist, so off the map."

Wadler suggested an independent panel, with at least three doctors, review all the medical exemptions in what he termed "a sport that grew up on greenies."

By receiving a medical exemption players are allowed to take banned stimulants and not be penalized for what otherwise would be a positive drug test.

Rob Manfred, baseball's executive vice president of labour relations, said it would be a mistake to compare ADHD in baseball with statistics for the general population.

"We are all male. We are far younger than the general population, and we have far better access to medical care than the general population," Manfred said.

*Kansas City Star, Jan. 12*

### Canada

#### Canadian figure skater tries to double his fun

Marc Theriault is the first Special Olympics athlete to land a double jump in competition.

Theriault, one of only two Level VI male skaters in the competition, packs about eight jumps into his free skate, including a difficult double-Lutz and double-double combination. He was the first Special Olympics athlete to land a double jump in international competition, he said.

Theriault won gold in singles in the 2001 World Winter Games and gold in pairs and silver in singles in 2005. He also has won gold in soccer and softball in two World Summer Games appearances.

The 30-year-old from Delta, British Columbia, has been skating for 23 of the past 24 years - since his mother, Karen, enrolled him in the sport at age 6.

He sat out one year, when he was a teenager, because the family moved from Quebec to British Columbia.

"My mom always wanted to skate, but because she didn't have the money when she was younger, she decided to put myself and my sister into figure skating," Theriault said. "At first, I was skating for my mom. But after that one year off, I decided I was going to skate for myself. And now I enjoy it more than when I was younger."

Said Karen: "I decided that when I had children I would put them in figure skating - and I think it was a good choice."

Theriault, who has epilepsy and a learning disability, began his sports career in "generic" programs. He learned to skate alongside those without disabilities.

Collins once asked him how he became so good.

"He said the coaches never expected anything less of him," she said.

"They demanded he do things like any other skater."

*CHADD CRIPE - idahostatesman.com, Feb. 10*

# PROCRASTINATION BUSTERS!

By Deanne Repich

"I'll do it... tomorrow." Sound familiar?

Procrastination -- putting things off until the last moment -- or beyond the last moment, is a common problem. For anxiety sufferers, procrastination can really do a number on us mentally and physically. It can put our fight or flight response into high gear and trigger a rush of anxiety symptoms.

Here's the good news: Procrastination is a habit that you can change!

Let's look at why we procrastinate in the first place. Then I'll share a simple and easy procrastination buster you can use immediately.

When we procrastinate, we conserve energy by not doing the task we're avoiding. However, what we often fail to realize is that we're using even MORE energy over the long haul by avoiding the task. Here are some of the downsides of procrastination:

- Nagging guilt
- Not enjoying other activities because you're thinking about the task
- Feeling disappointed in yourself
- Feeling like you're lazy
- Self-criticism
- Feeling frustrated because you want to get started on the task, but you don't
- Fatigue and lack of energy
- Letting the avoidance control your life -- doing your laundry, meeting friends, clearing out your filing cabinet -- anything to avoid the task
- Spending lots of time THINKING about the task without DOING the task
- Missing deadlines and making excuses

Our reasons for procrastinating all boil down to one basic fact: Procrastination is our way of avoiding uncomfortable feelings. When a task seems difficult or overwhelming, we feel uncomfortable. People gravitate toward things that make them feel COMFORTABLE. We procrastinate because the prospect of doing

the task -- even though it benefits us in the long haul -- makes us feel UNCOMFORTABLE. Even though we don't like procrastinating, it feels like the lesser of two evils. Procrastination seems less uncomfortable than doing the task.

What if the task was achievable and you felt comfortable doing it? You'd procrastinate a lot less, wouldn't you? You'd get a lot more done and feel a lot better.

That's what the Divide and Conquer method is all about. The Divide and Conquer method works because it makes you feel COMFORTABLE, and it's EASY.

### Divide and Conquer Method

**1** Pick an important task that you've been avoiding -- something you've been wasting lots of energy thinking about. Write it down on a blank piece of paper, for example: "Prepare for job interviews."

**Note:** Complete this technique on paper instead of mentally because you'll get better results. The process of writing things down keeps your mind from making a task seem more difficult than it really is.

**2** Starting at the final goal listed at the top of the page (e.g. Prepare for job interviews), DIVIDE that goal. Break the goal down into several steps, writing each one down.

For example, you might have a list that starts with "Prepare for job interviews" and breaks that task down into ten, twenty, or more steps. Your list of steps might end with "Buy new interview outfit."

**3** Read the last step you wrote down. Ask yourself: "Does this feel comfortable? Is it something I know I can easily do?" If the answer is Yes, CONQUER the goal. Do it right then and there.

After you complete the steps, congratulate yourself and move on to the item above it on your list. If the answer is No, then Divide and Conquer THAT step. Repeat the Divide and Conquer process, as many times as necessary until you come up with a step that feels easy, comfortable, and achievable.

It's easy, isn't it?

This Divide and Conquer process works because it allows us to complete even the most intimidating tasks in manageable chunks that fulfill our human desire to feel comfortable. By doing tasks in a graduated sequence they become easy and doable.

In addition, we feel GOOD because we see visible progress. We feel instant gratification -- a sense of accomplishment after completing each small step. Each step we complete creates a positive snowball effect -- increasing our self-confidence and making it easier to do the next step. You've probably heard the saying: "How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time." The same goes with any other task. Divide tasks into easily doable steps that you feel comfortable with and you will succeed.

Remember: Divide and Conquer!



## ASK THE EXPERT

# COGMED WORKING MEMORY TRAINING: Improving Attention in Adults

Howell Gottlieb, M.A. C.Psych.Assoc.

In 2005, Dr. Edward Hallowell, one of the co-authors of the best-selling seminal text, *Driven To Distraction*, published an intriguing article in the Harvard Business Review, with the provocative title, "Overloaded Circuits: Why Smart People Underperform". Dr. Hallowell observed a recent trend at his clinic -- clients presenting with symptoms of distractibility, restlessness and impatience that he believed were signs of "a very real but unrecognized neurological phenomenon that I call attention deficit trait or ADT". Unlike ADHD, a neurological disorder, Dr. Hallowell asserted that ADT stemmed from the rapidly accelerating pace of modern life: "It is brought on by the demands of our time and attention that have exploded over the past two decades.....the brain gradually loses its capacity to attend fully and thoroughly to anything".

If you are seeking clear cognitive neuroscientific explanations for our collective experience of ADT, there is no better place to start than Dr. Torkel Klingberg's *The Overflowing Brain: Information Overload and the Limits of Working Memory*, which was recently published in North America. In this highly readable and insightful book, Dr. Klingberg, Professor of Neuropsychology at the Karolinska Institute in Sweden and the developer of the Cogmed Working Memory Training program, begins by questioning the assumption that attention is a unitary system. Highlighting the research conducted by the psychologist Michael Posner at the University of Oregon, Dr. Klingberg stresses the important distinction between two attention systems in the brain: *stimulus-driven* attention, which is highly reactive ("what was that noise that I just heard in the hall?") versus *controlled attention* (the type of attention that you need to ignore internal and external distractions in order to keep reading this article).

Dr. Klingberg details how a deficit in working memory (WM) capacity can create a bottleneck interfering with learning and attention. As described in my previous *Communiqué* article, WM, the ability to hold and manipulate information for a short period of

time, is directly linked to controlled attention. When we are struggling with constant interruptions and multitasking at work, more often than not, the culprit is our limited WM.

Psychologists have charted the trajectory of WM development throughout the life span. In the general population, there is a steady increase in the ability to hold and manipulate information throughout childhood and adolescence. WM capacity has been found to plateau in early adulthood, followed by a slow decline (a sombre fact reported by Dr. Klingberg: a 55 year old has been found to be functioning at the same level as a 12 year old on WM tasks).

In children with ADHD and many learning disabilities, WM appears to plateau at a young age; these students' learning challenges are compounded as they fail to keep pace with their classmates and subsequently are faced with increasingly greater executive function demands as they progress to the later grades.

If the rapid pace of technology is the source of ADT symptoms in the general population, one can only imagine the struggles for late adolescents and adults diagnosed with ADHD and WM deficits.

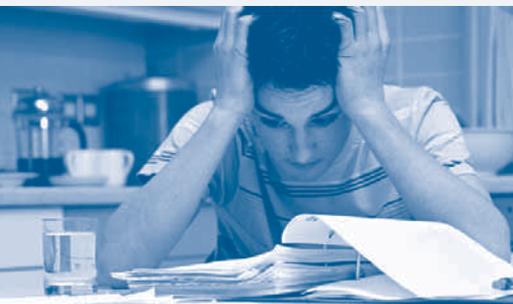
For university students, WM is essential for everyday adaptive functioning, including getting to class on time, meeting deadlines estimating the time to complete tasks, prioritizing and being capable of breaking projects down into manageable steps -- not to mention the impact of WM deficits on academic skill development, including the ability to write essays, study for exams and sustaining attention while reading textbooks or listening to lectures. No wonder those with WM deficits tend to have great difficulty working effectively in pressure situations and are prone to feelings of panic.

As university students transition to the work place, they cannot escape the demands on WM, as there are increased expectations for professionals to manage their time efficiently and autonomously complete multi-tasks.

The crux of Dr. Klingberg's book entails a description of his current research studies which address the question as to whether WM can be trained. It was this question that was of course the impetus for his development of the computer-based Cogmed Working Memory program, which has been shown to be effective in improving sustained attention & task orientation, as well as reading comprehension and math reasoning in children with ADHD and learning disabilities.

## Cogmed Working Memory Training with Adults

The Cogmed Working Memory Training program for adults follows a similar format to the children's version. An individual works on a series of computerized verbal and visual-spatial WM tasks for about



30 to 40 minutes a day for 25 sessions (five days a week for five weeks). To increase motivation, the software program uses an engaging video game format. Adults receive immediate feedback and the difficulty levels of the tasks are adjusted in order to maintain optimal performance. A key component of the training is that each client is assigned a personal coach, who regularly analyzes results and provides ongoing motivation throughout the training.

## Research Studies

Cogmed continues to be based on empirical research studies. A 2007 study conducted by Dr. Helena Westerberg, a colleague of Dr. Klingberg, examined the impact of Cogmed training on a non-clinical group of adults. The subjects included a group of older adults (age 60-70) and younger adults (age 20-30). The methodology was similar to the 2005 study of children with ADHD, a double-blind study in which subjects from each of the age groups were randomly assigned to a Cogmed versus "Low Dose" Treatment (difficulty of WM tasks remained at a low level). The results indicated that the Cogmed group improved significantly on measures of WM and sustained attention. In addition, significant improvement was noted on self ratings of attention and everyday cognitive functioning. Although both the older and younger adult groups demonstrated significant improvements, the gains were larger for the younger group. At the three month follow-up, improvements were maintained.



A recently published article in the journal *Science* by Dr. Klingberg and his colleagues has created a stir in the science community and provides further evidence of the plasticity of the brain through WM training. By monitoring changes through the use of Positron Emission Tomography (PET scans), Cogmed training was found to alter the brain chemistry in prefrontal and parietal lobes, specifically in the neurotransmitter dopamine receptors. This link is significant as previous research studies have shown that abnormalities in the dopamine system are associated with WM deficits and ADHD. Dr. Klingberg addressed the significance of the finding in *Science Daily* (February 9th, 2009), "Brain biochemistry doesn't just underpin our



mental activity; our mental activity and thinking process can also affect the biochemistry. This hasn't been demonstrated in humans before, and opens up a floodgate of fascinating questions."

## Cogmed at JVS Toronto

With the development of new Cogmed software, introduced in January 2008, JVS Toronto was able to offer Cogmed training for late adolescents and adults. Particularly exciting is that in partnership with York University, we have been providing training for a group of students that have been identified with WM deficits.

Feedback from students have been positive with anecdotal comments indicating increased ability to sustain attention, and improved cognitive efficiency. The results of our preliminary pre and post testing are demonstrating gains in measures tapping sustained attention, reading comprehension and response inhibition. Although more data needs to be collected, the results are consistent with those found in the random controlled research studies and indicate that WM skills can be expanded beyond childhood.

## Conclusion

There appears little doubt that we are facing a future that will include an ever increasing faster flow of information. However, rather than reacting with dismay and attempts to avoid environments that place greater demands on attention and WM, Dr. Klingberg concludes that there is a large body of research clearly indicating that "it is in situations that push the boundaries of our abilities that we train our brain the most".

Dr. Klingberg's words echo the pioneering work of the Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky. According to Vygotsky's theory, an individual's level of competency develops and feelings of stress dissipate when tasks are designed to fall within "the zone of proximal development". The key to coping with ADT symptoms appears to be developing our sense of mastery by seeking out optimal learning conditions -- challenging tasks that we are capable of mastering through rigorous effort.

Cogmed Training program is an evidence-based based computer tool for children, adolescents and adults that systematically trains the brain by working within the zone of proximal development and expanding the boundaries of WM.

# PUBLIC POLICY ROUNDUP SPRING 2009

## Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Standards Development

The proposed **Information and Communication Standard** was released for public review from November 17, 2008 to February 6, 2009. A total of 478 organizations contributed feedback either at regional consultation meetings or in writing, and more than 300 written submissions were received. Most respondents considered the draft standard to be a good start, but there was consensus that proposed timelines were unrealistic and that more clarity was needed to improve understanding of the standard. The standards development committee met in March to review specific recommendations and after meeting again in April a final draft will be sent to the Minister.

The proposed **Employment Accessibility Standard** was released for public review from February 18, 2009 to May 22, 2009. The proposed standard requires organizations in Ontario to provide information about jobs in accessible formats, give disability awareness training to all employees, and prepare accommodation plans to help employees with disabilities perform their job. Information on the standard and the feedback process can be found at: [www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/mcsc/english/pillars/accessibilityOntario/accesson/business/employment/](http://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/mcsc/english/pillars/accessibilityOntario/accesson/business/employment/)

disability assessments or the modification of equipment for training apprentices with special needs.

## Provincial Auditor's Report

In December 2008 the Provincial Auditor's Report was released, and you can read it at: [www.auditor.on.ca/en/reports\\_2008\\_en.htm](http://www.auditor.on.ca/en/reports_2008_en.htm). The report covers several areas that are relevant to persons with learning disabilities, including chapters on Special Education, Adult Institutional Services (Corrections), Child and Youth Mental Health Agencies, Community Mental Health, and Employment and Training. Among the findings in the Special Education chapter:

- IPRCs do not adequately document the rationale for their decisions and the evidence they relied on.
- There was not enough evidence of parent contribution to the IPRC process and to the development of IEPs

LDAO will be preparing a response to the report.

/dao

## Ministry of Education Initiatives

The Ministry of Education has posted a series of presentations for educators on Individual Education Plans (IEPs) at [www.ontariodirectors.ca/PA\\_Day-Spec\\_Ed/index.html](http://www.ontariodirectors.ca/PA_Day-Spec_Ed/index.html). The series of four slide decks are titled: *Knowing Your Student*; *Individual Education Plans (IEPs) 101*; *Developing More Effective IEPs*; and *Collaborating for Better IEPs*.

Sample IEPs for various exceptionalities can be viewed at: [www.ontariodirectors.ca/IEP-PEI/index.html](http://www.ontariodirectors.ca/IEP-PEI/index.html)

The Ministry has also posted a read-only version of its **IEP template**, including pull down menus, for parents and students to look at. It can be accessed at <https://iep.edu.gov.on.ca/IEPWeb>

The user access is: **Username:** IEPDemo **Password:** demo

## Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Initiatives

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) is providing funding to Ontario colleges for **Support for Apprentices with Disabilities**, to assist colleges in meeting accommodation and accessibility needs of individuals with disabilities in apprenticeship programs, pre-apprenticeship programs and Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Programs. Funds are to be used for accommodation purposes as well as for



# LEARNING DISABILITIES

## and the arts

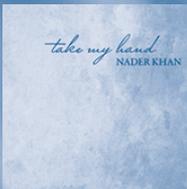


*Our meetings with the spirit are usually rooted in symbol and image. From the earliest cave paintings to the newest installations; from the scrawled word to the plaintive song. For many people with LDs, living in an inarticulate, external world, arts—be it dance, music, visuals, literature, acting, even the humble art of quilting—are an expression of that articulate world inside.*

*Spread across Ontario, the individuals in these pages, some well-known, most not, strive to make sense of their worlds through acts of creation. Some have made it their careers and been rather successful. Others use their form of art as a coping mechanism for a world that doesn't "get them." Still others create because it's all they know. One of the ironies about learning disabilities is that one's deficits sometimes lead to unexpected joys of discovery. A visual-spatial problem may in fact lead towards music during the search for answers, only to discover that auditory processing has been enhanced in an act of compensation: Voila, a star is born.*

*People as diverse as singer Cher, actor Henry Winkler and comedian Whoopi Goldberg have for years known about the healing powers of the arts, and they've managed to channel their creative energies into successful careers. Not everyone can make it on American Idol, but then that's usually not the point. It's being able to find a tiny corner in the world and make it all your own. It's about dealing with challenges while learning about intuition, risk taking and different forms of thought. And it's about riding that sometimes bumpy terrain on that journey into the self.*

*We invite you to share the ride.*



# The artist and dyslexia

By Marion Boddy-Evans, *About.com*

An interest or career in art is definitely a strong possibility for anyone who has dyslexia. The positives associated with dyslexia – and, yes, there are positives – mean you've an in-built aptitude for two-dimensional visual representation and three-dimensional constructs.

## What is Dyslexia and Might I Have It?

Dyslexia can affect people in several ways; have a look at this simple checklist of traits:

- **Reading:** Skipping, scrambling, and reversing letters and numbers is common, as is the blurring of words on paper. Associated with this is a pronounced difficulty in reading (it tends to be a tiring process) and an apparent loss of concentration.
- **Handwriting:** Because the feedback from what you see of letters and numbers as you write becoming scrambled, the handwriting of dyslexics is often untidy and variable. Curiously, dyslexics are often able to write upside down or backwards with ease.
- **Motor skills:** Dyslexia is associated with problems of balance and coordination (such as being able to tie shoelaces or catch a ball), and confusion between left and right. (*In some people – LDAO*)

## What is Dyslexia Doing to My Thinking?

Dyslexia is the result of cognitive problems in the processing of the phonological parts of language. It is essentially a left-brain problem where

language is not processed in the correct sequence. This means that anything to do with understanding and interpreting sequences of symbols is harder than normal.

## Why is Dyslexia a Problem?

The biggest problem with dyslexia is the generation of low self-esteem. This is often as a result of poor interaction with the education system, which can label those with dyslexia as deficient or unenthusiastic for learning as a whole without taking into account the problems that dyslexia can create.

## What is Positive About Dyslexia?

Compared to the average person, a dyslexic generally has very strong visual skills, a vivid imagination, strong practical/manipulative skills, innovation, and (so long as the education system doesn't inhibit it) an above average intelligence. Basically the right side of the brain is stronger than the left – and that's what a good artist needs!

## What are the Visual Skills Associated with Dyslexia?

As a dyslexic you are likely to have a greater appreciation for colour, tone, and texture. Your grasp of two-dimensional and three-dimensional form is more acute. You can visualize your art before

reaching for the paint brush, and your imagination will allow you to go beyond the norm and create new and innovative expression. In other words, you are creative!

## Which Famous Artists Are Said to Have Had Dyslexia?

The list of famous artists believed to have been dyslexic includes: Leonardo da Vinci, Pablo Picasso, Jackson Pollock, Chuck Close, August Rodin, Andy Warhol, and Robert Rauschenberg.

## What Now?

In the past people with dyslexia would find themselves propelled by the education system towards vocational training or manual labour. It's well past time for the individual's creative nature to be acknowledged, and for their creative expression to be encouraged. If you have, or know someone who has, dyslexia, then consider getting hold of a few basic art materials – either paint, or clay, or pencil -- and getting stuck in. You may well be astonished by the results.

## Find Out More About Dyslexia:

If you think you may have dyslexia, start by reading up more about it and then find a qualified person to consult for a definite diagnosis.

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THE VETERAN

# RICK GREEN:

## *Dancing With One Leg Shorter*

**Wikipedia got it all wrong: Rick Green is alive and kicking, and wrapping up a new documentary, thank you very much.**

The Canadian actor-writer-director, perhaps best known for his work on the long-running comedy series *The Red Green Show*, got a chuckle months ago when the citizen-owned online encyclopaedia greatly exaggerated rumour of his demise by announcing his premature death.

"Several people were actually rather upset by it," Green chuckles over the phone. "But the mistake's been corrected."

If anything, it's Rick Green's aliveness that makes him such an engaging conversationalist. The passion when he speaks about his ADHD; it's impact on his life as an artist and the child-like joy of discovery as he describes some of the content of his upcoming documentary, *ADD and Loving It?*, airing on Global this Fall.

Hosted by Canadian funny guy—and frequent Green collaborator—Patrick McKenna, the hour-long film depicts the condition as a disposition rather than a disability. It features interviews with successful people living with the condition from all walks of life, while acknowledging "all the bad stuff as well," says Green.

"You'll be surprised at all the things we discovered," he says somewhat mischievously. "The amount of misinformation out there is incredible. Even experts were surprised."

One of the myths swiftly dispensed with is that meds are bad," he says. "These meds have been prescribed since 1937 and are effective 80 per cent of the time. For the remaining 20 per cent there are either no results or poor results. Teachers say kids flourish when they are on the right meds, especially when compared to the kids whose parents choose the drug-free route."

Green's own medication regime includes Ritalin and Concerta. "Both are amazing and



have made a big difference, he says. "What I got was that this helped turn down the noise."

"But it was actually less than a decade ago when Green, 55, was diagnosed with the condition. Acceptance of the label was strictly a Kubler-Ross (or, grieving) process he says.

"At first, I was relieved at the diagnosis because I finally had an explanation for everything. Then I felt anger, then more anger after talking with friends and family who said the behaviour was associated with creativity. Then, sadness at "had I but known."

Green likens ADHD to being on a dance floor with someone and grooving the night away on one leg that's about three inches shorter than the other and shifts to the left.

"So there you are, out on the dance floor, and suddenly, you've knocked over your date, and she's knocked over someone else, and they've knocked over the punch bowl, and suddenly you're left with this big mess all over the floor, and you're left feeling like a bad person.

"It's a relief to realize you're not all those things, but it doesn't explain or excuse anything because you're still out there on the dance floor and you start thinking about all the costs. So then you say, 'let's see what

happens with a three-inch heel in my shoe and for the first time things are even and you're arriving on time."

Has ADHD helped his creativity at all?

"It's helped me be trusting to allow ideas to flow," he says, reflecting on a long career that's included high water marks in Canadian television acting, writing, directing and producing stints on *The Red Green Show*, which ran for the better part of a decade.

Green's also known for creating, writing and acting in shows like TVO's *Prisoners of Gravity*, and *History Bites* for The History Channel. For several years he was a key player on CBC Radio's long-running *Frantic Times* featuring Toronto comedy troupe The Frantics. Along the way he wrote articles for *The Globe and Mail*, recorded comedy albums, acted in the odd movie, and received accolades and awards. Not bad for a youngster who started out as a teacher with the Ontario Science Centre.

"Creativity is a muscle that you build" he says. "One of the most satisfying things about being an artist is seeing something obvious nobody's ever noticed before. You are able to do something without being exploitive and show the truth as we know it."

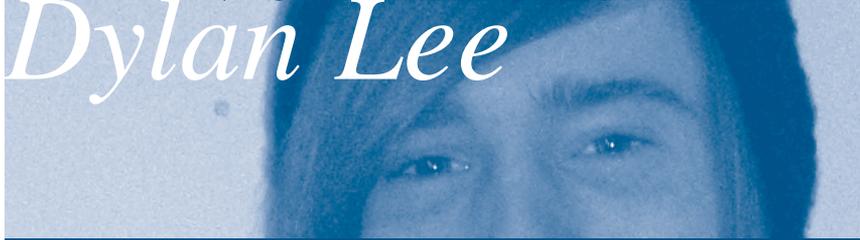
That creativity and trademark humour is sure to be front and centre during the upcoming *ADD and Loving It?*

Of all the diagnoses, this one brings so much hope," he says. "The brain is flexible and you can play to strengths and work around your weaknesses. If you can do that, you can soar."

*ADD and Loving It?* Will air as part of the Global TV series *Currents* in the Fall. For more information on the documentary, a fan page exists on Facebook.

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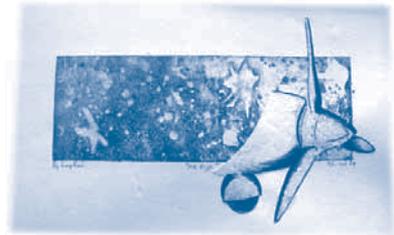
# Tell A Vision *Dylan Lee*



By Tracy Fawdry

*Coming through the door of LDA London, Dylan Lee shared wonderful news he just received – acceptance to college.*

*His happiness and excitement was clearly evident. As a student who has experienced his share of struggles with learning, goal attainment and satisfying the requirements of a traditional school setting, uttering the words and realizing the accomplishment must have been overwhelming to him.*





Lee, 19, is a student who was accepted this year to the reputable, full-day Specialist Art Program at Beal Secondary School in London. Despite making art since his elementary years, he didn't take a foundational art credit until grade 11 after transferring to Beal from another high school that, as he puts it "just wasn't working". Despite resenting his family over this school transfer for a while, he now describes it as a pivotal moment in the direction of his life and future choices.

Lee remembers substantive struggles with learning beginning in grade 7 when "more was expected" and more time was spent with learning and homework. He recalls "doing Math and English was like needles to my skin. I would come home unhappy and I would wake up unhappy with the thought of school."

His mother remembers doodling and drawing being present on all of the incomplete school work coming home. His challenges with school drew Lee more to "something [he] could grasp and knew [he] could do". This is when he started drawing. One of the consistent messages received during Lee's struggles came from his mother who encouraged him to pursue his strengths and things he enjoyed.

Lee describes his current experience in the Specialist Art Program as "thriving". Unlike his earlier school experiences he says, "I wake up and get to school early! I'm excited for the next day/week to come." Despite thriving on learning all new art forms, etching and photography are his two exceptional loves right now. He describes each lesson in etching as "one of the biggest motivations I've ever had". Instructor Ron Milton brings samples of his own etchings to school which Lee also finds motivating and exciting.

Lee's currently in the early planning of his first collaborative art show, encouraged by teachers, family and other artists. Although he knows art will be a passionate, ongoing part of his life, he doesn't feel fully aware of where he's going with it, but he says, "this has always been a trend since I was young".

Still a young student, there is time to figure things out as Lee enters Fanshawe College's Fine Arts Program in the fall of 2009. Even if art is a side career, he knows he'll make it work. Being an artist feels "comfortable" for him and being around other artists is "a supportive environment", something that must be amazing for an LD student who "never felt in the cool crowd".

Teaching art to others is a longer-term goal for Lee who would clearly bring a world of understanding to his future students having learning difficulties.

His advice to others with LDs shows the development and positive attitude he's gained around self-understanding and self-advocacy through a lot of work and family mentoring.

As our interview came to a close, and I asked Lee if there was anything else that was essential for this article, he said, "I've gotten to the point where I'm comfortable with who I am" and "I want people to know that I'm really just happy!" What a wonderful place to be as a young student.

Despite taking a long time to get to this point, Dylan Lee believes that his learning struggles forced him to confront difficult issues, grow and build strength of character that is now holding him in good stead as he enters a new phase of challenges in the world of art education where he is thriving.

/dao

## Dylan Lee's advice to students with LDs:

- Find someone at school that understands learning disabilities and who can help you advocate on your behalf
- Understand your learning disability so that you can ask for what you need
- Learn self-advocacy skills so that you can depend on yourself when you get older
- Know that there are so many kids just like you
- Know that learning is so different for everyone; Don't think of it as a learning disability but as a learning difference



*Jeff Rafuse*

# The BEAR Facts

*By Annie Sheehan*



When sculptor Jeff Rafuse asked the Lambton County chapter if he could donate a piece of art to the Resource Centre, the answer was a resounding yes. The resulting serpentine sculpture of a bear holding his paw in the air is the star attraction at the Sarnia centre. The piece is called “Can I Belong? The Dyslexic Bear”. The artist sculpted the piece and gifted it to the chapter for a few reasons. “I didn’t talk a lot as a child” says Jeff Rafuse. “I knew at a young age that I was different from other boys. I had a hard time comprehending what others were saying, struggled in school and often fell prey to teasing from other kids. It wasn’t until my last year of college that I was diagnosed with dyslexia” says Rafuse.

It would seem that dyslexia would be a very understood and accepted learning disability in our 21st century – rocket science world. Yet dyslexia and other learning disabilities are complex and very individual to the person. Imagine for a moment not

being able to remember your phone number or house number in a conversation. What if you had to meet a friend and mixed up the street name? Think about having to work two or three times harder than other classmates to prepare for an exam, to find out that the teacher has included a surprise question that you are not prepared to deal with. How about never being able to get the drift of a joke, or being able to respond to quick remarks in social situations? This happens to everyone some of the time but it happens to those with dyslexia all of the time.

In many cases it is hidden from others in an attempt to fit in. But “fitting in” doesn’t always happen when we want it to. A life lived everyday with fear and doubt compete with our basic human desire to belong. The emotional impact for a dyslexic child going to school, and trying to compete within the mainstream, is ultimate frustration, with the feeling that you will never be like them. Being on the receiving end of a quick and sarcastic remark in a circle of classmates is like getting a soccer ball in the face. Dyslexia is far more complex than having difficulties reading or reversing numbers, and can include problems with writing, spatial relations, directions, time management, word recall and memory.

The sculpture symbolizes the student who wants to ask the question “Can I belong?” “One of the basic human needs we all have is that need to feel a connectedness to others – to belong. “I wanted the sculpture to speak to children who may feel what I felt when I was young. I knew there was no better place than the Learning Disabilities Association – they do great work. I want those who see the bear, who hold its cold smooth paw, to know that they’re not alone and they can aspire to inspire” said Rafuse.

Executive Director of the Lambton County chapter, Annie Sheehan, knows about the strong connection between artistic ability and learning disabilities. “We have so many gifted artists who also happen to have learning disabilities. We have struggled in the past with the issue of celebrating the gifts of our community versus comments regarding exploitation. Jeff’s gift to our chapter is so huge because it allows the piece to speak to people in a very clear and beautiful way – and it does. I have walked into our resource library many times to find a child standing in front of the bear holding its paw and whispering to it.”

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# THE VALLEY GIRL

*Hands on and  
Hand over Hand*

by Jenniferann Heward-Eastham

Being learning disabled has its moments, but I decided to learn how to quilt during this last year because I needed a release from all my stresses. The stress of living for me has been getting more than I could handle. I am dealing with and caring for a parent who has Alzheimer's and dementia so I am doing all the shopping, bills, banking etc.

I decided to join the local Ottawa Valley Quilters Guild so I could learn from the best. (I just love doing things with my hands) I took private lessons almost a year and just finished my first lap quilt. I am also getting more involved in the Quilters guild by being a co-volunteer coordinator for our upcoming quilt show in May at the RA Centre here in Ottawa. This will be also helpful because I am almost finished a course in Volunteer Management.

The reason I chose quilting is because of the beauty of the colours. I am into bright colours because I can see them better. The reason I took quilting is because it is a meaningful art which you can do for a loved one or charity, a hospital. The list goes on. Quilting is a special art that many people can't do because they have no patience. I do it as my stress releaser and for the joy of the colours. I also make my own painted material that I can use in my quilts. Making my own material is a unique way to design a quilt. It takes a lot of practice to get the perfect quilt.

In order to quilt you need to practise cutting, have an eye for colours and how

to blend them, be willing to learn new techniques. The possibilities are endless when playing with materials. There are so many different ways to put a quilt together. Quilts have been around for a very long time. It goes back to my mothers' mother days so it is an art form all on its own.

I am planning to do a quilt that shows the way I see the learning disabled community. Bright colours are best for me, because of my Irlen Syndrome.

Irlen Syndrome, or Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome, affects the way people

quilt will be done with the log cabin squares and it will be bigger. It will cover a single bed. It takes years to master quilting so I am having lots of fun learning my new art form and will be using my own painted fabric.

When I get really good at cutting and sewing then I might think about making an art quilt which hangs on a rod. Art quilts are only for show. I have a quilting coach to help me with cutting and she has been very supportive and she knows how I learn. She teaches me the way I learn best: hands on and hand over hand.

*Quilting* is a special art that many people can't do because they have no patience.

I do it as my stress releaser  
- and for the joy of the colours.

perceive the printed page and/or their environment differently. If they are severely affected, they must constantly make adaptations or compensate. Individuals are often unaware of the extra energy and effort they are putting into reading and perception. Reading may be slow and inefficient, or there may be poor comprehension, strain, or fatigue. Irlen Syndrome can also affect attention span, listening, energy level, motivation, work production, and mental health.

I am still very much a rookie quilter, with only one quilt "under my belt". My second

I would not be where I am today without my quilting "coach" Liane. Quilting is repetition in the form of art. To end up at quilting I tried many different forms of art. Drawing classes which I had no skill for; painting classes where I discovered I had an eye for colour. I also found myself joining sewing clubs to get

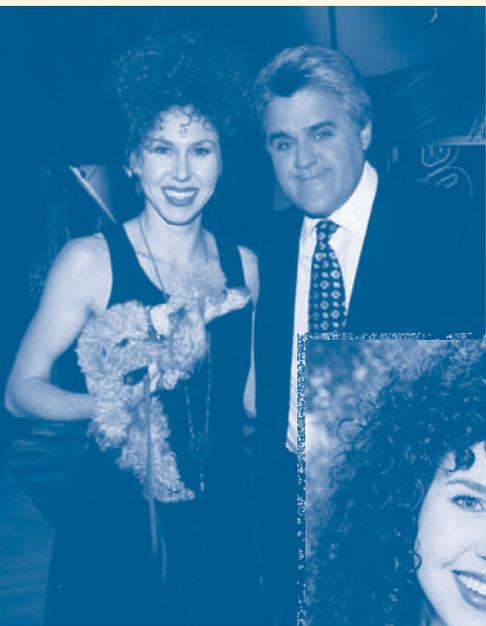
practise for my sewing stitches and experience in sewing straight lines. Quilting is about sewing lines, curves and angles so the more sewing practise you can get, the better development of skill levels. The skill level takes years to develop but some people never get to the master class. It is all in the eye of the beholder. I am having great time learning from the best quilters in my guild, and being part of the quilt show committee. The camaraderie is very supportive. I hope everyone can find a place like this for themselves, like I have.

(dao

## LESLEY ANDREW

# *Go Big or Go Home*

By Carter Hammett



“When I started acting, people were surprised that I also sang. Likewise, they were surprised that I was also an actor. We have a tendency to put people into little boxes, but as long as you have a good story, you’re good to go.”

# SONGBIRD:



Our interview starts with a joke:

**Question:** *What's the difference between a musician and a pizza?*

**Answer:** *A pizza can feed a family of four.*

This is the humour that's kept singer-actor Lesley Andrew in high demand throughout her career. It's also the type of biting wit that she liberally peppers her highly rated and in-demand motivational speeches with as well. She's had extended runs at Stratford appearing in productions ranging from *The Mikado* and *Twelfth Night* to *Patience*. She's recorded three cd's full of well-received jazz music, answered the calls of people like Jay Leno, Oprah Winfrey and Donny and Marie. She's wowed 'em during tours of Europe, Canada, the United States and Argentina. She's done all that and continues to perform, teach, adjudicate and direct shows as well.

"As an artist it's either feast or famine in Canada," she cracks. During summer you're normally 'on hiatus' which means 'unemployed.' To survive, you either have to be specific or go the diverse route. I chose to go diverse," she says.

"When I started acting, people were surprised that I also sang. Likewise, they were surprised that I was also an actor. We have a tendency to put people into little boxes, but as long as you have a good story, you're good to go."

It wasn't always that easy though. It's an attitude that's been cultivated only after years of practice and training. A rarified creature indeed, Andrew was diagnosed as Gifted LD only while attending high school in Milton, ON, an experience she describes as "pretty horrible."

"During public school we had an open pod concept, which means there were no walls." Given that her LDs affect her auditory processing, that must have been difficult to say the least. In addition, she also lives with dyslexia, "and all the other ics' as well," she jokes. "I didn't know my times tables and was terrible at math."

Reading music was also difficult for her, although she developed a method for overcoming this as well. To this day

she struggles with concepts that are unrelated to each other, lists, for example.

The giftedness was in some ways as big a burden. "For a while I could use the giftedness to cover the LD," she says, "but people assume you're faking the LD." Part of compensating for her was learning to exploit her differences.

"As a musician you make your living standing out in a crowd. And hey, I'm 5' 10" with curly red hair. So I capitalized on it. You either go big or go home."

Despite her success, in true Canadian style, she still auditions for parts.

"Success for me is never having to audition," she says. "But this is the age of technology and that hinders performers. As an artist you can't rest on your laurels. You have to prove yourself over and over again."

So she moves between opera and operetta; classical and jazz. "I sing whatever pays the mortgage."

Some of these stories are shared in her popular "Beating the Odds" workshops, which she frequently gives at conferences and appearances around the province. "I cover things like being responsible for your time, being rewards-driven not consequence-driven and being positive," she says. It's a formula that appears to have worked and carries over into her messages about living well with learning disabilities.

"You've got to hang in there and choose friends who are going to support you; be willing to make decisions and live with the results of that decision. Are you going grow your nails or bite them? The value is in your difference and that's what makes you beautiful."

For more information, visit Lesley Andrew's website at: [www.dreaminprogress.com](http://www.dreaminprogress.com)

/dao



## THE REBIRTHEE: *Sheri Cohen*

Perhaps no one was more surprised at Sheri Cohen's radical transformation from non-profit administrator to explorer of world beats than Sheri Cohen herself.

Four years after resigning from her post as executive director of ALDER, Ontario's only LD-specific job preparation service, Cohen resurfaced along with musical comrades Gary Diggins and Trefor Randall and a surprisingly great CD called *Birth Stories*, which had its launch late last year at Toronto's Cecil St. Community Centre before an enchanted audience.

With its pulsing blend of world beat sounds and tribal rhythms, *Birth Stories* is a multidimensional soundscape of civilizations long gone placed in a dance context that celebrates life anew. With no "songs" to speak of, the cuts are more moving meditations structured around tightly-knit, primal riffs that showcase Cohen's braying didgeridoo, (also called a "didge") Tman's flutes and the chanting voices of both.

With spirituality at the core of her growth, Cohen was unsure of what path to take after resigning from ALDER, so she explored various causes and philanthropic forms and dedicated herself to finding new forms of spiritual expression. In 2005 while attending the Threshold conference on Cortez Island, BC, a practitioner named Shine played the

didgeridoo during a healing session that touched her deeply.

"It could be said that the instrument spoke to me and I immediately felt called to a connection with this instrument, a bond in ways that were unexplainable. This experience with the didgeridoo opened me up to other aspects of myself that I felt were hidden, a voice within a voice that needed to be heard, felt, and shared. It was a voice that I had often hidden because of my own fears."

Not long after, a therapist suggested that playing the didge might be a more effective use of the breath work Cohen was engaged in, and in 2006 this led to a meeting with Toronto musician/educator Gary Diggins, who became Cohen's mentor and eventual producer.

"While the didgeridoo is about making a 'buzzing' sound, it is first and foremost an instrument that teaches the player how to breathe. The primal and musical textures that pour through this long, wooden tube are controlled and shaped by a range of breathing techniques.

"When I started playing, most of my air was coming out in an inefficient way by puffing my cheeks and blowing air by squeezing them together like a bellows. As I delved deeper into the breathing possibilities, I

learned that I could create a clearer tone by pursing my lips together, more like a trumpeter. At this point, I began to understand how crucial breath was to playing the didgeridoo. As simple as breathing properly or intentionally may sound, my problem centered around a deeply held belief that I didn't have the right to take in enough breath to feel vital and fully alive.

"I shared with Diggins that I had LDs and that I needed to learn by hearing and doing," says Cohen. "It took a long time to figure out the sequencing, and I had to retrain my brain to make certain sounds and be present. We put things on tape and took quite a while, but on the same time this opened me up on a spiritual level."

While attending The Big Beat, a regular gathering of like-minded people interested in exploring sound, dance and ritual run by Diggins, Cohen met Tman and was immediately attracted to the unearthly sounds he was able to produce.

"Hearing Trefor chant, I said to Gary, why not ask him to join us?"

Tman immediately agreed and the trio set about laying the foundation for the music initiative, initially called *The Monk Funk Project*. Cohen and Tman improvised the entire CD on flute, didgeridoo and chanting



# The Beats Go On

voices around rhythm lines created by, and under the direction of, Diggins.

"Gary knows what I'm capable of and during the recording process he'd say things like, 'I want you to conjure up an old shaman. We went deep into places that scared me,' says Tman. "We had to acknowledge where those sounds came from."

Those places were deep indeed and are reflected in the album throughout in chants, whoops, hollers, bleats and whispers from both. "I started doing voice work a little while ago, and chant daily," Cohen says. "It's interesting how my voice changed during the process. Now, I don't feel so self-conscious about it all."

Even the track titles reflect a musical collision of traditions, belief systems, cultures and histories, including Buddhist, Jewish and shamanic traditions. "Jataka" a personal favourite, that brilliantly showcases Cohen's honking didge, is taken from a Buddhist word.

"I wanted dance music mixed with world beats and this is what we wound up with," says Cohen.

Other titles include the beautiful "Boundlessness" which was intended as a new way of saying the Kaddish, says Cohen. Others like "Boobuyah" simply were a gift from "the voices" as Tman says.

The didgeridoo is perhaps the world's oldest wind instrument of the Aborigines of northern Australia. The instrument is traditionally made from living Eucalyptus trees, which have had their interiors hollowed out by termites. Didges can measure anywhere between three to nine feet in length and generally, the larger the instrument, the lower the sound. In the Kakadu region of Australia, the instrument has been documented in cave paintings.

"Traditionally, only men played the didgeridoo," says Tman. "Women played the drums. In western society, the energy of the earth is feminine, so it's about women reclaiming their roots."

The finished result has garnered positive reviews, indeed, including comments like this: "Instantly, I recognized eternal human sounds, combined with the didgeridoo, which resonated deeply within, as no other music ever had. Soaring on an extraordinary plane, I imagined our primitive times, when we banded together and lived in respect of Nature. In rapture, I felt that when music was created, this has to be it. My supreme compliments to all the makers of 'birth stories'.

The album's been gathering rotation points on CIUT and further evidence of the CD's magic occurred when some tracks were even selected for inclusion in a recent

documentary by Toronto filmmaker Nik Sheehan called *Flicker*.

"Music has been my saviour; it's how I learned about life," says Tman. "My own natural tendency is to play instruments in the moment and find the natural rhythms of something as I go along. I'm a multi-dimensional artist."

Cohen puts it succinctly: "Music is a tool of healing and gives people a voice. When they can't verbalize, it comes out emotionally as sound."

"The didgeridoo, like a special ally, has accompanied me throughout a shift from social worker/activist to a budding musician. I had no idea this hollowed (or hallowed) piece of wood might open opportunities to experience real joy and deepen my understanding around cycles of giving and receiving.

"Now I use my didgeridoo to enter a place of dwelling, no longer a person in exile. I play and I reside in a place where I listen to wild or wonderful sounds. I hear the music that my heart wants to sing."

For more information, visit Sheri Cohen's website at: [www.shericohensound.com](http://www.shericohensound.com)

By Carter Hammett

Idao

## THE WORDSMITH:

## Michel Flannery



I was told that I would never be able to write, spell, or even read at a normal adult pace my whole school life. Words like “you may as well give up now”, “Michel, you’re gonna need to spend more money on an editor to edit your work before a publisher would even take a look at the train wreck that is your writing” were common. I have a language-based LD that affects my short-term memory and visual spatial skills, in addition to ADHD.

So, as many people, I believed the advice of my teachers as pretty much gospel. People ask me “Michel, why did you believe the people that said you could not always write?”

“Michel, you’re gonna need to spend more money on an editor to edit your work before a publisher would even take a look at the train wreck that is your writing.”

Well, that’s a very good question. Yes, I was always able to create a story in my head...but after that, it was pretty much a crash-and-burn scenario with a lot of frustration, yelling and migraines.

Well, at least until one very odd day in grade nine...What makes this day so different than any other day in my high school life? Well, it’s pretty simple now that I think about it and am writing it down in this format.

I was given two, fresh-out-of-university, graduate teaching assistants who never knew anything about me, my background, my life, nothing. So, after chatting amongst themselves they looked at me and asked me to write anything that was on my mind. I thought, “Well, I can’t write,

this is unfair”. Yet another writing project I would get back with corrections and red ink all over the page. I said with a very annoyed tone “Are you crazy? I can’t write, let alone spell.”

So the younger teaching assistant gave a go at a pretty-much-untouched writing style that I personally never saw, or heard of, since I was in grade three.

Now what was the style she asked me to write you ask? To my surprise, as well as to the surprise of both of my young teaching assistants, I grabbed the pen, the same pen I gave back to them before. This time, I started to write down a few lines on the page. To me it felt just a jumble of words. Writing them down really meant nothing to me, though it did take a while to come up with the very words I wrote.”

They would turn up to be a whole new talent I never even knew I had, and a talent I would have never known I had if it was not for a few simple words. “Go ahead Michel!!!! Give it a try, anything goes.” It won’t be marked; I just want to see what “Michel” can do.

So to the surprise of everyone sitting at my group of six in my high school learning strategies class, I wrote two poems which defied explanation and earned me my first dual B+.

Since then I’ve continued writing poetry and other works, including *The Mental Health Survival Guide For Patients & Families – A Q+A Guide For all Concerned*, which was published May 1, 2007, and is available for free pick up at three Toronto hospitals. I’m currently working on an updated version of this and currently working on three more

Survival Guides, including one on ADHD. I also write a highly-ranked technology blog at <http://computersavvy.wordpress.com> which is directly related to my company Computer Savvy, which offers PC maintenance and training services.

The following poem is one of the pieces that got me to where I am today----

**You, are all that**

*You, a beautiful*

*You, are a statue in the park I can't get enough of...*

*The shrine of that lost Greek G-D,*

*Where people go to pray for peace and stability in their lives.*

*The lost and forgotten rose with the petals turned up words to the sun,*

*For the last burst of light before the rain...*

*The one person, that will laugh at a joke told for the hundredth time...*

*A notch in time symbolized by a single drop of the forbidden and fearful tear drop falling off the cheek of the children of yester year looking up for the gleams oh hope and joy they have believed gone forever...*

*You, are beautiful*

*A person in the crowd tiring to find that person,*

*That belongs by your side,*

*The change for the better....*

*That will never leave your pocket with the emptiness and pointlessness of a sudden impulse...*

# World Beatster Issues Stunning Debut

Nader Mohammed Khan is a Canadian Muslim singer & songwriter who's been singing all his life - from his birth in Hyderabad, India, to the many stops the caravan of his life took until he arrived in Canada in the early 90's.

He is widely-traveled and has enjoyed the privilege of experiencing a broad variety of cultures and traditions. This is reflected in his work as he fuses various genres and draws on many different styles, tunes, rhythms and modes. He sings mainly in English, Arabic, and Urdu, and plans to add more languages to his repertoire on his next album.

ReliefWorks (<http://www.Relief-Works.com>), the company that produces Khan's albums, is a unique initiative that promotes local relief efforts through contemporary Islamic devotional music and arts, "in pursuit of Divine pleasure through beauty, excellence, and service of God's creation".

His first album was released in December 2008 in Toronto. It had been in production for almost ten years.

Initially, he had been focusing exclusively on Arabic and Urdu songs. As he read more English translations of devotional works by scholars of Islamic spirituality and mysticism, such as Ghazali, Rumi and AbulHasan Shadhili, he began developing English content, trying to give a relevant, contextualized, and accessible voice to an ancient tradition. This proved difficult at times - taking as long as five years to finalize one song. At other times, it proved surprisingly easy - 'The Quest' was composed in an inspired mid-afternoon in Toronto in 2001. A similar moment on a busy Dubai freeway was where he wrote 'Take My Hand' in 2005 - a song that could only have come together through his experiences in Canada.

Quite a bit of experimentation has gone into this album, whether it's the rendering of Urdu poetry recitations and songs into Arabic and Persian melodic modes with a backdrop of Indian and Chinese drums, or the singing of English lyrics to distinctly Turkish tunes. Khan hopes his listeners will find it both enjoyable and inspirational.

Check it out at: [www.naderkhan.com](http://www.naderkhan.com)



## These Three Cities

These Three Cities is, in the truest sense of the meaning, a band. They live, work, write and record together. While a lot of other musical entities are trying to hire the next great session professional for a few gigs, These Three Cities is reminding their fans and all that appreciate music what it means to be in a band.

These Three Cities came together as a full unit in the summer of 2006. Jeff Beadle and Matt Rocca, who lives with ADHD, had been playing in Toronto as an acoustic act while they were writing and recording their debut CD *Kickapoo Joy Juice* along with Rob Pretsell, the guitarist at that time. Later joined by bassist Chuck Dumaresq and drummer Mike Spear, the band was formed... for now. They spent the next two months under an extremely rigorous practicing schedule in preparation for the upcoming debut CD release show which was held at the Horseshoe Tavern to a sold out crowd and rave reviews.

Over the next 18 months the band dedicated themselves to developing their sound and style by writing any idea into a song and playing any show they could get their hands on. Their end

result was a raw rock foundation of intense dynamics with a slight roots-y, old fashioned twang on top. In that time they shared the stage with many up-and-coming bands, and rubbed shoulders with

some of the industry's top professionals like producers Bob Ezrin (Jane's Addiction, Pink Floyd) and Brian Moncarz, (The Junction, Kyle Riabko)

All of these experiences have led T3C to become a tight, passionate group of friends with an undeniable chemistry on stage that has allowed them to write their best music yet. They have just released a six-song EP with producer Adam Tune and already have more

songs half recorded for their next ambitious release. The 'Cities' have gone back to a simple approach in recording which allows the raw, human element to shine through just enough to connect with everyone. This formula, along with their musicality and friendship both on and off the stage, is what will take These Three Cities to the next level....

Andy Gemza

*(Stay tuned for an in-depth profile of the band in the next issue of **Communicué**)*



# Provincial News and Views

## SUDBURY

### “Reading With Your Ears and Writing With Your Mouth”

The new year got off to a flying start in our community awareness campaign! Flying, because Todd Cunningham's feet never touched the ground during his visit to Sudbury to participate in our campaign, titled “Read With Your Ears, Write With Your Mouth”. Literally, from the moment he arrived on January 15, 2009 until he headed home the next day, he was at centre stage in our community. Todd shared his story and demonstrated assistive technology to “turned on” audiences during four presentations. His evening community presentation in the Council Chambers at Tom Davies Square was awesome. The interactive use of the two large wall screens and a white board resonated with the power of how assistive technology can support individuals with learning disabilities. In partnership with the Glenn Crombie Centre, Cambrian College and local school boards, Todd made two high school presentations to students and educators which were truly motivational! One student called it “a turning point” in his education!

His fourth presentation before leaving Sudbury was at the invitation of the Student Union from the School of Education at Laurentian University. This event, sponsored by the Special Needs Office at the University was tailored to the teachers of tomorrow. It was a motivational session that the President of the Student Union referred to as the “unreal power of assistive technology” that all university students could benefit from.

In the course of two days, 537 participants in Sudbury were left with the lasting message that “reading with your ears and writing with your mouth” is another way to demonstrate that a different way of learning can lead to success.

The first few months of 2009 also launched our expanded partnership with Laurentian University, School of Education and our coaching program. LDAS has now embarked on a new journey thanks to a two- year project funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

In the three-pronged partnership project every one of the 150 second-year School of Education students will have a 40 hour placement with LDA Sudbury. After receiving an enhanced mandatory training on learning disabilities, 60 university students will be paired with grade 7 and 8 students with learning disabilities, during the school year and receive coaching not only associated with education, but as mentors to prepare them for transition to high school. Eighty students from the School of Education, after 16 hours of training will be placed in grade 4 to 6 classrooms, to work with teachers and educational assistance, to support students with learning disabilities utilizing their individual education plans. Finally, in the third element of the partnership, 10 keen university students will be selected to present an evening program for elementary students with learning disabilities on “ME”, with social skills and self-advocacy curriculum based content.

Gwen Price of our Board of Directors, who sits on the coaching program coordinating committee, says “this is a win-win-win

program”. Future teachers win, parents win and most of all, students with learning disabilities are winners!

LDAS is really excited about 2009 and it's off to a great start! The Planning committee is already in place to celebrate *October Is Learning Disabilities Awareness Month*. This year we are celebrating in partnership with the folks at the Glenn Crombie Centre and have some great events being organized. We are developing two new community outreach presentations: Teaching Differently with Differentiated Instruction for educators and P.A.R.E.N.T.S GPS Navigation System will be released at the 2009 Pathways Conference on May 23 and 24 at Cambrian College. Here at LDAS, we remain focused by our Board of Directors and committed to our ‘rising stars’ that have the right to learn and the power to achieve!

## TORONTO

### Hidden Disabilities Program Launched

The Learning Disabilities Association Toronto has just received funding from the United Way Newcomers Grant program to initiate the Hidden Disabilities Program!

This exciting program will provide after-school remediation for at-risk children in grades one- to-three. Why aren't these children learning? Many are newcomers to Toronto and overwhelmed with English as a second language, the curriculum moves too fast and they get lost too quickly, they haven't matured sufficiently to catch up or might be suffering from early indicators of a Learning Disability at play. With our fabulous early intervention program, we can help these children learn.

Our program will run Monday to Thursday from 4:00pm to 6:00 p.m. out of our community partner Northwood Neighbourhood Services office which is located at 2625 Weston Road (Weston Rd./ Hwy 401 area) and will serve children in the catchment areas of Lawrence Ave. to Steeles Ave. from the south to the north and then from Weston Rd. to Keele St. from the west to the east.

Volunteer tutors will be trained to provide LD specific remediation. We are looking for volunteers who can devote 4 to 8 hours per week. Can you help?

For further information, please call our Program Coordinator, Pauline McFarquhar at (416) 229- 9046.

## WELLINGTON

### UNDERACHIEVEMENT, DRUGS, REBELLION

The Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County presented a well-received presentation on March 25, UNDERACHIEVEMENT, DRUGS, REBELLION: The Challenges of Parenting A Teen Boy with a Learning Disability and/or ADHD.

Presented by Mr. Kim Muller, Supervisor, Trellis Mental Health & Developmental Services at the Zehrs Community Room in Guelph, the evening offered enlightening and practical advice to parents of teenagers with LDs. Thanks to all those attended and a big shout-out to Kim Muller for an engaging presentation.

More information on the subject can be obtained from LDAWC by calling: (519) 837-2050 (answering service) or email [wclda@rogers.com](mailto:wclda@rogers.com)

## **YORK REGION**

### **All That Jazz Scheduled for May**

#### **Diverse Group**

In the past year we have been very active with a variety of diverse cultural groups in York Region, hosting information sessions, focus groups and presentations both in schools and in community centers. Learning has been very much a two way road. LDA York Region speaks to these communities about Learning Disabilities and Attention Deficient Disorder and they in turn talk to us about their cultures and how they view LD/ADD issues. We are hoping to run some more courses and parenting groups in the near future that will be based on what we learned in this valuable exchange of information and ideas .

#### **Parent Support**

The community need for our parent support groups continues to grow. As a result we have added a morning parent support group. They meet the second Tuesday of each month. We run this group from September to June. Some topics we have discussed:

1. How to advocate for your child
2. Controlling emotions in stressful situations
3. Discipline
4. How to organize your home

Quote: *"Being with other parents I realize I am no longer alone."*

#### **Adult Support Group**

We have an active adult support group that meets the second Wednesday of each month. The program runs from September to June and discusses topics like:

1. Self-esteem
2. Bullying
3. Getting a better job

We do include some social activities as part of this group, including bowling, dinner and movies.

Quote: *"A good interactive group who can discuss things."*

#### **SOAR**

We continue to run successful sessions of SOAR. Student feedback indicates they come away from the program with a better understanding who they are, where or what it really means to have an LD.

Quote: *"People like me who have LD are no different from people who don't."*

#### **Job Fit**

Our Job Fit program continues to grow. Participants may be looking find more suitable jobs that match their LD while other are looking to return to school to upgrade their education. The goal of the program is to allow participants to be better preparing to deal with the challenges.

Quote: *"I greatly enjoyed Job Fit. Upon completion of Job Fit, I have now been able to re-evaluate where I need to be."*

#### **Social Skills**

Our social skills groups continue to be well-attended. We offer three sessions throughout the school year: in the Fall, Winter and Spring. These sessions are held in both Richmond Hill and in Newmarket. The groups are designed to help children with LD and /or ADHD develop appropriate behaviours and skills.

Quote: *"What I liked about the group was that each Monday when I came there, I felt happy and good about myself."*

#### **ABCs & 123s**

ABCs and 123s is a teacher-guided, child and parent focused program. We build the skills that parents need to effectively encourage their children's emerging literacy and numeracy skills.

Our ABCs 123s volunteer tutor program continues to be a great support to students in Senior Kindergarten through Grade 3 struggling with basic numeracy and literacy. We are very fortunate to have matched over 100 children throughout out York Region.

Quote: *"It was great to build a relation that was comfortable for the parents and for myself, as well as a friendly and positive learning environment for the child. It was a pleasure to participate in the student's learning process. We learned a lot together."*

#### **Fundraising & Public Awareness**

##### **Vintages & Jazz**

We are currently working on our major fundraiser, Vintages & Jazz. Now in its tenth year, this annual event and will be held on Sunday, May 3 from 2pm – 5pm. We are thrilled to announce that UBS Securities Canada Inc has once again generously agreed to be our major sponsor. We are also pleased to announce that Bill Hogarth, Director of Education with the York Region District School Board will be our Honorary Chair.

##### **Summer Picnic**

Last summer we held our first picnic. It was such a success that we will be hosting a second annual picnic on Monday, June 29th from 4:30pm - 8:00pm. We are looking forward to another fun filled day of wonderful games, good food and of course great prizes.

**LDA York Region's** Executive Director and staff continue to do many creative community outreach and training workshops in schools, work placement and community agencies. We would also like to acknowledge the success of other programs that would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of our co-op students from York University, Seneca College and Humber College

Quote: *"The ideas & strategies that were shared to assist teachers, to dialogue with parents and students so to lead to student achievement."*

*"The passion and her shares were very insightful."*

# Thank You

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# IN PERSON: Acupuncturist/Shiatsu Practitioner **MATT SEDO**

## The Point of The Matter

The diagnosis came as a relief.

Eight months into his newly-opened shiatsu business, Toronto's Matt Sedo was finally diagnosed with ADHD.

"This business means everything to me right now," he says. "It was kind of a relief to know I'm not a screw-up."

Still, he loses his keys three times a day, perpetually misses details, states his memory isn't what it could be. All his life there's always been someone telling him he's not listening.

When you open a business, you often learn quickly what you're not good at. It's one thing to call yourself an alternative practitioner, or a writer, or a virtual assistant. It's quite another thing to realize you're often your own bookkeeper, public relations officer and administrative assistant as well. Sedo readily admits he's not a numbers person and is grateful to have business partners who look after those kinds of details.

"Running the business at first was overwhelming," he says. "I was making a lot of mistakes. I am a workaholic, but I'm not very efficient."

Looking back, he realizes the life-long signs had always been there. "My father was a minister and I was always squirming in church," he chuckles. "I couldn't seem to focus on anything. I was always active...I used to jump off houses." In class, he remembers always talking; they called him Motor-Mouth.

"I seriously thought everyone else was just anal," he says.

Physical activity was one of the few healthy outlets for him as a child. At one point, the only thing he felt he could focus on was springboard diving and he was successful enough to compete in provincial championships.

But his school marks suffered throughout his formative years. When he was 16, his family moved from Prince George to



*Matt Sedo*

Kelowna where he enrolled in an alternate school which meant he could choose his own subjects.

While he vaguely remembers being diagnosed with dyslexia back in the 80s, Sedo says it was always the "hyperactive" label that stuck out in his mind. "I always felt deficient and it wreaked havoc on my self esteem." To compensate, he self medicated and experienced bouts of depression. The condition seemed to infiltrate every aspect of his life, from relationships, to school to work.

Nonetheless, he excelled at language arts and after acquiring an ESL certificate went to live in Japan for two years. During that time, he experienced his first shiatsu treatment, and immediately felt connected to what he calls "the grace of it." Back in Canada he studied at the Shiatsu School of Canada, where he graduated with diplomas in both shiatsu and acupuncture.

"The great thing about that (school) was that it was half academic-half school," he enthuses. "It gave me something physical to do. Shiatsu is almost an art, and it's

something I can arrange. It relaxes me to be constantly moving, and when I'm working it gets rid of a lot of agitation."

It's been said that acupuncture can help reduce the impulses that make it difficult for someone with ADHD to stay still. Acupuncture practitioners also claim the complementary therapy can help improve concentration while enhancing the flow of energy in the body which can help the person with ADHD to maintain a positive outlook, and regulate sleep. Acupuncture may also be useful for dealing with some of the side effects associated with drug therapies.

There is of course, no magic "answer" or treatment for ADHD, and those living with it should always be prepared to continue being treated by their physicians. The acupuncturist however, can nonetheless be a key part of the individual's treatment team.

Like many with the disorder, Sedo is gradually gaining comfort with the structure he's able to impose on his own business. His partners are both aware and supportive of his condition too. Even the space he operates in is kind of a weird juxtaposition of retro-funk that seems to reflect his own energy when he speaks. At home, Sedo has learned how to create systems that help him prioritize, organize and communicate. He keeps three boxes of "to do" stuff, puts tasks into a data dump book and keeps a notebook on him at all times.

"ADHD is really a journey of self acceptance," he says. "It's about learning how you operate. The condition kind of puts you into a different universe you can only change if you have some kind of understanding around it. It sheds light on where you can fit into the world."

*For more information on Matt Sedo and Six Degrees Acupuncture, visit [www.pokeme.ca](http://www.pokeme.ca)*

**- Richard Antosik  
/dao**

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**Tel:** (519) 352-2024  
**Fax:** (519) 352-0734  
**E-mail:** ldack@netrover.com  
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**Fax:** (519) 438-0368  
**E-mail:** lda@linkd.net  
**Web site:** www.ldalondon.ca  
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**Fax:** (905) 791-5189  
**E-mail:** ldanp@bellnet.ca  
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167 Percy St., Ottawa, ON K1R 6E5  
**Contact:** Teresa Trollope  
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**Fax:** (613) 567-5979  
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## **LDA Peterborough**

Peterborough Office:  
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Peterborough, ON K9J 2R8  
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**Contact:** Margó DaleTel: (705) 942-4310  
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**Web site:** http://www.geocities.com/ldassm

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76 Mulcaster Road, 2nd Floor  
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**E-mail:** info@ldasc.com  
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**Contact:** Ron Lessard  
**Tel:** (705) 522-0100  
**Fax:** (705) 522-2589  
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Thunder Bay, ON P7A 4B2  
**Contact:** Lisa Coccimiglio  
**Tel:** (807) 345-6595  
**Fax:** (807) 345-7086

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203-121 Willowdale Ave.,  
Toronto, ON M2N 6A3  
**Contact:** Mimi Hoffman  
**Tel:** (416) 229-1680  
**Fax:** (416) 229-1681  
**E-mail:** admin@ldatd.on.ca  
**Web site:** http://www.ldatd.on.ca

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**Contact:** Karen Guse  
**Tel:** (519) 837-2050  
**E-mail:** info@ldawc.ca  
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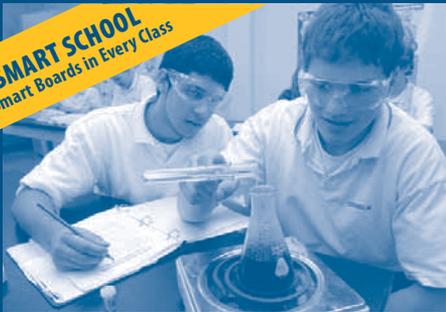
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Windsor, ON N9A 4J4  
**Contact:** Beverly Clarke  
**Tel:** 519-252-7889  
**Fax:** 519-252-4169  
**E-mail:** learningdisabilities@on.aibn.com  
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221-1181 Yonge St.,  
Richmond Hill, ON L4S 1L2  
**Contact:** Lynn Ziraldo  
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Fax: (416) 929-3905  
E-mail: [membership@ldao.ca](mailto:membership@ldao.ca)  
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