

## The Chair's Award

Established in 2007, the Chair's Award was created by REDI Enterprises to recognize individuals, businesses, and organizations that have contributed significantly to creating opportunities for people with disabilities to be included in the mainstream of our community. Recognition is for outstanding efforts to create opportunities in the workplace, in daily living or in social and recreational activities.

- 2007 Medicine Hat Family YMCA** for their support and development of the Living Fit Program, a fitness program for people with disabilities at the Y. Living Fit has become a model for fitness programs for people with disabilities. The Y Board and staff have embraced the idea of creating an organization where all people are welcome. Entering the Y, a person is immediately struck with the diversity of its members. The YMCA was nominated for the Alberta Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities Award of Excellence and was the winner of the 2007 City of Medicine Hat Civic Inclusion Award. Canadian Paraplegic Association, the Multiple Sclerosis Society, Canadian Heart and Stroke, and Brain Injury organizations across Canada are all accepting Living Fit as a model of an inclusive fitness program.
- 2008 Shawna Churchill, Kimi Duzan, Robyn Givens, Coralee Little, Erin Schlepp, Pamela Wagner, Colleen Wasilow.** In June 2008, a former client, who had moved away and then returned to this area, was in personal crisis. This came to the attention of our agency and, on an emergency basis, a handful of staff spontaneously worked hard to assist this person. They went well above and beyond the call of duty, making an outstanding effort to assist. Regrettably, despite the heroic efforts, this man took his own life. This was very traumatic for the REDI staff who had truly given of themselves. An outside professional, familiar with the work of our REDI staff members said that, notwithstanding the tragic outcome, their work was hugely impressive and reflected greatly on REDI.
- 2009 Icy Mountain Water Co., and Charlotte and Neil Bonogofsky, owners/managers, and Todd Cudmore of Kelsey's Restaurant.** Icy Mountain Water Co. is a locally owned business which has shown leadership in supporting adults with developmental disabilities to be involved in the community. The Bonogofsky's created a culture and environment in their business where all employees were included, valued and treated like:"family". Todd Cudmore, Manager of Kelsey's Restaurant in Medicine Hat, has, over the past 10 years, created an environment where everyone's differences are celebrated and everyone belongs.
- 2010 SAAMIS Aboriginal Employment & Training Association.** SAAMIS Aboriginal Employment provides a wide range of Employment and Training programs to individuals of aboriginal ancestry. SAAMIS Aboriginal Training identified that there were no services for persons with disabilities of Aboriginal ancestry in Medicine Hat and surrounding area. Having identified the need, SAAMIS Aboriginal Employment and Training Association developed training for Aboriginal people with disabilities in a culturally sensitive environment. SETA's Vision Statement: "Our vision is that Métis and First Nations People will have pride in their heritage and have equal opportunity to pursue their goals, hopes and dreams."
- 2011 No recipient in 2011.**
- 2012 The City of Medicine Hat and its citizens** have been active participants in supporting people with disabilities to become fully and actively engaged in all aspects of our city. It is the citizens of Medicine Hat whose change in attitude has allowed individuals supported by REDI Enterprises to move from sheltered and segregated environments to being fully included in their work, their homes and their social lives. Awareness and Acceptance is very much a part of this City and there are so many examples of this. Just to name a few:

- Employment, volunteer, and club membership opportunities are readily available for persons with disabilities.
- Support for the REDI Bottle Depot, Recycling and other commercial ventures that support the work of REDI is ongoing.
- The City of Medicine Hat is an active partner in REDI Recycle and REDI Benches and provides a 99-year lease for land.
- Accessibility Planning for new facilities and an Advisory Committee on Disabilities has been established.

This year as we celebrate the 60 year anniversary of REDI Society, we wanted to thank the City of Medicine Hat and all its citizens for being active participants in the quest for community inclusion for persons with disabilities.

**2013 Mr. Hal Benson of Players Bench** was selected for his outstanding efforts to create an employment opportunity in his business. Players Bench is a franchise sporting goods store with five locations across Western Canada. Local retail owner/operator Hal Benson has been in the sporting goods business for more than 40 years. His history and connection with the Medicine Hat community as a whole, has been significant. Hal is a long time sponsor for youth sports teams in our community. Hal is not only a businessman but a valued mentor, coach and all – around – good guy. In the summer of 2011 Hal was approached by our REDI job developer regarding the possibility of employment for one of our job seekers. This individual is an avid sports fan and he was excited by the prospect of working at Players Bench. Hal welcomed the idea of hiring a person with a disability and an opportunity was created. Hal embraced the REDI staff and its protocols while supporting this position. This employment situation has been successful. One on one training support was provided by the job coach for close to one year for this individual to become proficient at his duties. Hal provided an opportunity for this young man to try a variety of tasks including sharpening and riveting skates and sorting sizes of clothes and shoes. He enjoys all these duties and excels at customer service, answering calls and sizing product. One of his co-workers states that “When he is at work, it brings a smile to our faces”. Now, nearly two years later, this individual continues to be a valuable employee. He regularly works at community and promotional events for his employer with continued REDI staff support. The owner was quoted as saying “When he is there, life is good”. This young man is known for being a motivating, inspirational asset to the Players Bench team. Players Bench is not only a role model for our individual but an example for other employers as well. Hal created not only an opportunity for our job seeker but fulfilled a young man’s dream to work in the sporting goods industry. This individual says it is a great place to work and feels a part of the team where he is valued for his contribution to the store. REDI Enterprises recognizes Hal for his ongoing involvement and efforts to enrich our community.

**2014 Mr. Dave Dawson – Shaw TV Medicine Hat.** Dave was nominated for his outstanding efforts to educate the community about the contribution of persons with disabilities and their value to businesses and organizations. Dave’s background as Sports Producer with Shaw TV is based on his love of Canadian sports which originated from having been born and raised in Swaggerville (Winnipeg, Manitoba). An eternal optimist, having lived and worked in the prairies, also known as “next year country”, allows him to see the best in people and situations. Shaw TV Medicine Hat Channel 10 “Go! Southern Alberta” tells its’ viewers what makes Medicine Hat tick. Even a quick browse through the videos created by Dave shows the outcome of his natural curiosity as he shares the stories of both individuals and organizations of diverse ages and interests featuring various types of activities. He created videos telling the story of individuals with disabilities who work and volunteer in Medicine Hat. He was excited to interview each person and to learn about their talents. He captured the sentiment of the organization and business in their comments on the video regarding the value the individuals bring to their job each day. REDI Enterprises congratulates

Dave on challenging myths and stereotypes and educating community that everyone can belong. Dave's words that introduce one of the videos says it all... "Discovering your purpose in life, while some desire it, few achieve it". Words of inspiration for us all!

- 2015 The Medicine Hat Police Service (MHPS)** - The Medicine Hat Police Service (MHPS) has been an outstanding community partner with REDI Enterprises for several years, working with our agency as Injury Prevention partners. Together with a host of other injury prevention focused agencies, the Medicine Hat Police Service works diligently to provide many education opportunities to community members. These opportunities, to name a few, have included, bike rodeos, safety days and the PARTY Program (Preventing Alcohol and Risk related Trauma in Youth). More recently this partnership includes the collaboration for the development of the Flagging System. The flagging system provides patrols with information and proactive approaches in dealing with individuals with Complex Support needs. The initiative has increased the knowledge and education of the patrol teams which in return has decreased the number of arrests and requirements for hospital visits. Over the next six months, REDI and the MHPS will be implementing a partnership that will provide an onsite and crisis supports Outreach Worker. This will assist individuals on the street to access community supports and close some of the well recognized gaps in the current system. In addition, the Medicine Hat Police Service developed the Community Engagement Initiative as a means to become more involved with community programs such as REDI Enterprises. After conversation with the REDI Vocational team, S/Sgt. Kelsey Fraser contacted Brain Injury Relearning Services to offer an employment opportunity to someone who had the appropriate skills to meet their employment needs. The Medicine Hat Police Service are now providing an employment opportunity for a local resident to assist them with fleet service work, while freeing up valuable police officer time. This opportunity not only gave someone a job but it also connected a person who has a disability to a whole group of coworkers in a socially valued environment. It has created a win-win situation for which we at REDI Enterprises and the new employee are grateful. REDI Enterprises recognizes The Medicine Hat Police Service for their ongoing commitment to creating opportunities for individuals who have disabilities.
- 2016 MEDlchair** - MEDlchair provides assistance to individuals with disabilities in a number of ways. They are an incredibly valuable resource providing medical equipment, supplies and expertise to Medicine Hat and our community for over 30 years. Their customer service has proven to be second to none as every request for assistance is treated with the utmost of urgency. They also have a passion for contributing to and maintaining an individual's independence as demonstrated when they created a position within their operation for one of REDI's clients. MEDlchair's new employee has had an opportunity to contribute to their successes while experiencing the inclusion of being part of their team.
- 2017 Tobi Magner – Dairy Queen** - Tobi manages a business that is inclusive, community oriented and accessible for everyone. She is a true leader and advocate for people with disabilities who is deeply devoted to creating a positive, supportive and barrier free work environment where everyone belongs. Tobi is committed to creating employment opportunities for people with disabilities and will step up to do whatever is needed to ensure employees are successful. She stands for equal opportunities for all, and promotes a work environment that is conducive to supported employment. Tobi collaborated with REDIworks to 'carve out' two positions for individuals with disabilities and accommodate their unique needs. She is open and willing to explore and use resources to assist in eliminating workplace barriers. Tobi states that "every little accommodation they have to make is so worthwhile". When an individual, who has been working for Dairy Queen for over three years as a Lobby Assistant, recently expressed his interest in becoming a Food Server, Tobi focused on his natural talents and skills and saw his potential. True to her values, Tobi researched accommodation options and ordered a custom-built tray for this individual's wheelchair, to make it

possible for him to serve food. By providing this essential accommodation, Tobi helped this employee reach his goal. The individual continues to thrive working at Dairy Queen and is very proud of his job. He is delighted to invite his friend and acquaintances to the restaurant and serve them. In another case, after meeting an individual who displayed a positive attitude, great enthusiasm and determination to work, Tobi created a Groundskeeper position for him. She assigned a fellow co-worker as an onsite mentor to help him learn his job duties and start a new career path. This individual is delighted about his job and very proud of his accomplishment. Tobi leads by example and gives every opportunity to her employees to learn and grow in their role, and contribute to the team to the extent they can. It is a privilege to work closely with Tobi and her team at Dairy Queen.

**2018 Tyrone Edwards,** Tyrone Edwards is the Volunteer Resource Coordinator for the Medicine Hat Regional Hospital – Alberta Health Services. REDIworks has been working closely with Tyrone for over 20 years through his role as Volunteer Resource Coordinator for the Medicine Hat Regional Hospital, where he has provided numerous opportunities for not only individuals with developmental disabilities, but all people that have a desire to volunteer and give back in the community. Tyrone is a true leader and advocate for people with disabilities who is devoted to creating a positive, supportive and barrier free environment where everyone belongs. Tyrone identifies the value of volunteers and what volunteers bring to the staff and patients at the hospital. He recognizes the talents and unique characteristics of the individuals that we work with and makes every effort to find them volunteer opportunities that match their skills and abilities. When needed, Tyrone has made accommodations to equipment/tasks in order to increase individual's independence in their volunteering. Tyrone knows the volunteers by name and takes time out of his busy schedule to stop and chat with them, showing genuine interest in their lives. In turn, Tyrone has become an important person in the lives of the individuals that we support to volunteer at the hospital, where they value him as a friend and someone they can trust. The recent hospital renovations resulted in some significant changes to routes and responsibilities for volunteers. Knowing our individuals and their unique needs, Tyrone kept us apprised of changes as and how he saw them affecting volunteers. Tyrone spent extra time retraining staff and volunteers to ensure that they were comfortable with the changes. When a longtime volunteer position was being discontinued, Tyrone worked diligently to find another suitable position. Tyrone takes the time to ensure all volunteers are recognized for their efforts, work, and dedication to the volunteer program and ensures all volunteers are aware of and invited to special events, volunteer luncheons, appreciations, and social gatherings. Many individuals take tremendous pride in their volunteerism and view it as their "work". It is a privilege to work closely with Tyrone at the Medicine Hat Regional Hospital. REDIworks would like to commend him for his passion and determination in making a noteworthy difference in the lives of individuals with disabilities, the patients at the hospital, and his efforts to create a barrier free environment.

**2019 Subway, Redcliff Drive** have proven themselves to be community-minded and fiercely committed to workplace inclusion. In 2015, the manager at this location successfully advocated for the creation of two dishwasher positions to accommodate specific skill sets for individuals supported by REDI Enterprises. There are no other Subway restaurants in our community that have a designated dishwasher position. From the very beginning, employees at this Subway restaurant have been very helpful with providing training and support and will step up to do whatever is needed to work with these individuals to overcome obstacles and ensure their success. Subway employees worked closely with REDIworks employees to deal with an individual's behavioral issues, poor attitude and attendance, and did not give up on the individual when those challenges arose. Instead, they worked with the REDIworks team to develop effective support strategies and to facilitate positive changes. Subway employees will go beyond the scope of their duties to assist when needed. When an individual got off the bus at the wrong bus stop and got lost, he phoned his supervisor, who

immediately left the restaurant to find him and bring him back to work. The supervisory team at the Subway on Redcliff Drive advocate for people with disabilities and are deeply devoted to creating a positive, supportive and barrier free work environment where everyone belongs, giving them every opportunity to learn and grow in their roles, and contribute to the team to the extent of their abilities. REDIworks would like to commend the team at Subway on Redcliff Drive for their efforts and determination in making a noteworthy difference in the lives of individuals with disabilities.

**2020 South Country Co-op** - Over the last 25 years the team at South Country Co-op have fiercely promoted workplace inclusion and the value that this is a community where everyone belongs. This last year has been exceptionally difficult during the time of global pandemic but they have not wavered in this commitment. They have worked to ensure the individuals supported by REDI have been able to thrive. Co-op's ongoing commitment to fostering positive connection for those who they employ make the writing of this nomination incredibly easy. They are always willing to help our individuals that need additional support without hesitation and ensure they feel valued as part of the team. We thank South Country Co-op for their support in creating opportunities for people with disabilities to be included in the mainstream of our community.

**Employees of REDI** - Each and every day, the employees of REDI work to attain the goals articulated in the criteria for the Chair's Award, but their work really shone during the past year as we were confronted with the COVID-19 pandemic and expanded services to the Brooks area. Through-out it all, the management and staff of REDI remained focused on the needs of individuals and used their creativity, ingenuity and tenacity to find ways to continue to create meaningful opportunities for persons with disabilities in the workplace, in daily living, social and recreational activities. The outstanding efforts of management and staff of REDI in exceptionally difficult situations merit recognition and embody the criteria of the Chairs Award.

**2021 Home Depot Medicine Hat** - Home Depot has partnered with REDIworks since 2004 providing seven employment opportunities for individuals in the REDIworks program. Home Depot collaborated with REDIworks in creating positions, adjusting job duties, as well as identifying and implementing accommodations, as necessary. Through volunteerism with Team Depot and monetary donations Home Depot has always been creative in finding ways to support REDI. The last year has provided many challenges and with every pivot we had to make the Management Team at Home Depot has worked with us to accommodate providing stability.

This spring Home Depot created four seasonal positions specifically for individuals supported by REDIworks. These greeter positions provided the opportunity for a first paycheck, dream job working in a greenhouse, and to return to the workforce after hiatus. It is easy to see that inclusion is an important part of the Home Depot culture with extensive inclusion/diversity training built into their onboarding. Ensuring each member of their team has allies lends itself to incredible natural supports and a deep understanding of the needs of our individuals. No matter what the situation management has consistently worked with us to help encourage individuals toward success. This spring when an individual we support displayed disruptive behaviors at work the team quickly found strategies to help support him to ensure his safety and safety of others. They worked with REDI to identify what prompted the behavior, and as it has been determined that he was bored at work, they quickly introduced and coached him on some additional duties that prevented him from being bored and reduced the behaviors.

Home Depot is known for regular social activities, in fact they celebrate at every opportunity. Each employee, no matter permanent or seasonal, is invited to participate in these celebrations as well receive Homer Awards and badge recognition for their efforts in the workplace. This year as seasonal employment came to a close, the store Manager advocated for an increase in his budget

to create a new permanent greeter position for one individual. Though he was not successful, the Manager was confident there would be another opportunity in the future with his name on it.

In 2018 Team Depot came together and helped to clean out the backyard at REDI's 12<sup>th</sup> Street group home, donated equipment rentals as well strands of Christmas lights in support of the BIRS memorial fundraiser. The Home Depot Team has stepped up to support REDI as a complete organization and share the philosophy of being good and supportive neighbors. They are a team that showcases the unique abilities of each employee, hires based on potential, and encompasses every aspect of inclusion in their workforce.

**2022 Medicine Hat Public Library** - The Medicine Hat Public Library has long been a supportive pillar within our community serving the needs of all individuals in Medicine Hat. The Library has numerous programs in place that are inclusive to all individuals in the Medicine Hat region.

Over the years, clients and staff from REDI Enterprises have had access to specialized equipment such as DAISY readers, talking books, audio books, and descriptive video that greatly enhance the lives of individuals who encounter barriers and need accessible media formats. Accessing computers and having short training classes available for all clientele has also been extremely valuable opening doors for furthering education and possible future employment opportunities

The library has also provided a safe place for gathering with peers to share in crafting, watching movies or just general socialization. A clean and positive environment, filled with constructive activities that can be accessed and enjoyed by all regardless of ability.

The award recognizes the excellent work of the library to create an inclusive and supportive environment for all residents of Medicine Hat, including creating inclusive spaces and programming at the library, offering employment and volunteer opportunities for persons with disabilities and having adaptive technology for accessing books and other media. The library has been a safe gathering place for peers to share and connect – a clean and positive environment filled with constructive activities that can be accessed and enjoyed by all regardless of ability.