



**THE PREMIER'S COUNCIL**  
ON THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES  
Alberta

December 2, 2005

Release at 1:00 p.m.

## News Release

### Albertans honoured for leadership efforts in helping the disabled

United Nations International Day of Disabled Persons celebrations today featured the awarding of five Awards of Excellence from the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

The awards recognize outstanding leadership or achievement in making positive change towards barrier free, inclusive environments. In Edmonton, Edmonton architect Ron Wickman was being presented with the Gary McPherson leadership award. The Edmonton Employment Partnership Employer Advisory Board was recognized in the category of employment and Camrose resident Theresa Mokry was honoured for her work in raising public awareness of persons with disabilities.

In Calgary, Lethbridge Community College's Campus Connections program was honoured for its work in education while a ceremony in Bow Island recognized the Bow Island Lions Club for its development of a barrier free playground and park facilities.

Premier's Council Chairman Rob Lougheed, MLA for Strathcona said recognizing the outstanding leadership efforts of people and organizations help raise awareness among Albertans of what can be done to create a barrier free Alberta. "We all have a role to play in providing the support and understanding persons with disabilities need to be full citizens in our society," noted Mr. Lougheed.

- 30 -

**Backgrounder attached:** Biographies of award winners  
**Media contact:**

Godfrey Huybregts, Communications Consultant  
Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities  
PH: 780-414-0525 Cell: 780-953-0525

**BACKGROUNDER:**  
**Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities**  
**2005 Awards of Excellence Winners**

**Gary McPherson Award:**  
**Ron Wickman**

For more than 10 years, Ron Wickman has been a leading advocate for barrier free design in buildings and on landscapes. As an architect, his commitment to accessible housing and his award winning practical and functional designs has earned Mr. Wickman national recognition as an expert in accessibility and barrier free design.

Mr. Wickman's credentials include a wide variety of structural and landscape projects. Two of note is the development of accessibility plans for the University of Alberta and Fort Edmonton Park. As a volunteer, he participates in many committees and boards that deal with accessibility in design. He freely provides his expertise and time to individuals and non-profit groups seeking his help.

"As an architect, Ron Wickman has been a great champion of universal design with the goal of designing buildings and facilities so that they serve the greatest number of people, regardless of ability," notes one of his clients.

"The characteristic that sets Mr. Wickman aside from others is his ability to work with all individuals of varying degrees of disabilities and accessibility issues. He strives to help them attain their highest level of independence through accessibility," reflects a member of a major provincial disability organization.

The Gary McPherson Award is awarded to individual Albertans who have demonstrated outstanding leadership or achievement in enhancing or enriching the lives of persons with disabilities.

**Award of Excellence, Public Awareness:**  
**Theresa Mokry**

Camrose resident Theresa Mokry has spent a considerable amount of time visiting Camrose and area elementary schools talking about "How people are different but we all have the same value." She focuses on the positive aspects of being different from one another and shares her experiences of living with a disability. School children, mainly Grades 3 and 4 respond enthusiastically to Ms. Mokry's presentation, which she developed herself.

Her sponsor, the Camrose Association for Community Living, reports that "the presentations had a profound impact on the children and the feedback from the schools

has been very positive. Because of the many children Ms. Mokry has touched, their families and the schools involved have also been impacted. This helps the community as a whole benefit from the presentations.”

The Award of Excellence in Public Awareness is awarded to a person, team or organization that has increased the public’s awareness of the benefits and value of a barrier free, inclusive environment.

**Award of Excellence, Education:**

**Campus Connections, Lethbridge Community College**

Campus Connections is an inclusive post-secondary education initiative that assists adults with developmental disabilities to enroll at Lethbridge Community College and be an active part of college life. For the past six years, Campus Connections has paved the way for persons with disabilities to grow and development in an educational environment.

The program has also had a positive impact on the college community at large. Many students have commented that it has been valuable to get to know students with disabilities for who they are, not because of their disability. Instructors have adapted teaching styles to meet the needs of all students in the classroom. As one instructor notes, “Campus Connections is an important facet of the LCC learning environment. It builds understanding for a life-time for all learners.”

The Award of Excellence in Education is awarded to a person, team or organization that has made a significant contribution to a barrier free, inclusive program, classroom or facility within a school or post-secondary institution.

**Award of Excellence, Community:**

**Bow Island Lions Club**

The Bow Island Lions Club spent three years planning, funding and constructing a barrier free playground and shower/washroom facility at Centennial Park in Bow Island. Children of all ages and abilities are now able to take advantage of this play area. A unique feature is a basic sign language learning centre that raises awareness of the challenges faced by persons with hearing or speaking disabilities.

The shower/washroom facility features wide access doors, accessible washrooms, vanities that are wheelchair friendly, automatic lighting and wheel in showers. “Forward thinking and quality planning has been prioritized to ensure these facilities are accessible by all members of the public,” notes Bow Island Mayor Alan Hyland. “It has provided a lot of new smiles and positive feedback.”

The Award of Excellence in Community is awarded to a person, team or organization that has made a significant contribution to a barrier free, inclusive environment within their community.

**Award of Excellence, Employment:  
Edmonton Employment Partnership Employer Advisory Board**

The Edmonton Employment Partnership Employer Advisory Board has worked since its formation in 2000 to coordinate employment services for employers and persons with disabilities. The Board's promotion of diversity and the employment of persons with disabilities have led to an increase in the number of persons with disabilities joining the workforce.

The Board is composed of 20 Edmonton region businesses, government authorities, educational institutions, business associations, staffing organizations and service providers. In 2005, the Board formed a partnership with the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce to create the Diversity Business Development Initiative. The initiative encourages employers to recognize the value persons with disabilities bring to the workforce and to see job candidates with disabilities as a good hiring opportunity, particularly now when Alberta is experiencing a labour shortage.

The Award of Excellence in Employment is awarded to a person, team or organization that has made a significant contribution to a barrier free, inclusive environment within the workplace.