Ability OnLine

Context

In many ways, technology, and the Internet in particular, can help put individuals on an equal footing. Ability OnLine, an Internet community for children with disabilities or chronic illnesses, uses the accessibility provided by the Web to help children across Canada make friends and build self-confidence.

Project Description

Ability OnLine capitalizes on the advantages of networking and instant communications to encourage dialogue and the creation of support groups for children, adults and families affected by illness. The Ability OnLine Web site is very popular: in 1997, the year it was officially launched, the site already had national significance.

Preceded by a children's computer camp and followed by a $1-million grant from Ronald McDonald Children's Charities of Canada, the project was able to expand its activities and provide volunteer support 24 hours a day. Around the same time, AT&T Canada and Microsoft Canada entered into partnerships with Ability OnLine to provide financial and in-kind assistance. Today, the program has 4,000 active members, and 20,000 to 30,000 individuals have signed up over the years.

Successes/Challenges

Today, the Web site hosts some 40 on-line conferences and electronic bulletin boards. There are also pages for teenagers and sample stories inspired by the entire community. In short, the Ability OnLine project goes beyond simple technological applications to provide practical help to the children who need it.

http://www.ablelink.org

These best practices are an excellent way of sharing your experiences with other organizations in the voluntary sector. If you also have positive experiences on the use of technology in the voluntary sector, the IM-IT Secretariat will be pleased to post your stories. Please contact the IM/IT Secretariat by e-mail at imit@ic.gc.ca .