

Everybody Knows Somebody with  
a Disability – Easter Seals is There



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extra copy, please call 1-866-282-8041.

# Ongoing Good

## Finding continued support and service thanks to SMD and Easter Seals

Mark and Candace Wozniuk from Minitonas, Manitoba have been working with SMD for more than three years now...and it's made a huge difference in their lives.

The Wozniuk's two girls, Tawny and Brooklynn, were both born with a genetic hearing loss. Brooklynn also had Sensory Integration Disorder which causes children to react differently to touch and movement. Diane Maydaniuk (who works at the SMD Parkland Office in Dauphin, Manitoba) became the girls' Case Worker and helped the family connect with an occupational therapist, physiotherapist and speech therapist.

Brooklynn, who has just turned six, has graduated kindergarten with flying colors. "The teacher and aides in the classroom made a wonderful effort to integrate sign language," says Candace. "Eventually it became a regular part of their daily routine, right down to the children answering questions during 'show and share' in ASL."

Candace has also been teaching ASL to nine-year-old Tawny's class for the past couple of years. "The children are already asking me if I will be coming this year to teach them a song for the Christmas concert and Tawny's class is getting invited to do performances at some of the long term care homes in Swan River."

It's a long way from where they started. Candace remembers when her daughters' hearing loss was first diagnosed. She was told little more than that they would be fitted for hearing aids and should be enrolled in speech therapy as soon as possible.

"That is when I started to make phone calls," says Candace. "I found out what kinds of programs are in the rural areas for people with disabilities."



Tawny and Brooklynn: stylin' and smilin'.

Photo taken by Doug Little.

"I must admit I never really thought about Easter Seals a lot until the girls came. But with SMD and Easter Seals, there is someone always there to answer your questions, be a shoulder to lean on and sometimes just to explain things in everyday terms."

"I think the final reward was when my daughter came out of her room after having her hearing aids for two weeks and told me Mickey Mouse could talk - we knew it was all uphill from there!"

# A Driving Need

## How Easter Seals helps steer funds toward SMD consumers in Cromer

“The biggest challenge is the travel for services, mainly doctors.”

Travel is only one of the challenges Paul and Rhonda Pennycook have faced while raising their children, Avril (age 13), Lexi (age 10) and Phoenix (age 6) on their farm near Cromer, Manitoba. But the problem is a significant one because both Avril and Lexi have Cerebral Palsy...and that requires numerous medical-related trips every year.

“The girls’ pediatrician is in Brandon – a one and a half hour drive. Lexi has to see him every four months,” explains Rhonda. “Avril goes to Winnipeg every four months for Botox treatment.”

“Before school started, we traveled to Brandon one to two times a month for Physiotherapy and O.T. Services. We have Special Devices clinics which we travel to once a year and, if any equipment of any size is needed, we then have to go to Winnipeg to have it fitted and picked up.”

Fortunately, SMD and Easter Seals are along for the ride, helping the Pennycooks obtain funding through Children’s Special Services to help offset the cost of travel, gas, and – when in Winnipeg – lodging and meals.

But SMD’s involvement doesn’t stop when the Pennycooks pull into their driveway. SMD Wheelchair Services provided Avril with both a manual wheelchair and a powerchair, giving her a greater sense of independence. Before Avril began school, a preschool outreach teacher would visit the family at home about every three weeks, bringing different activities suited to the girls’ needs. Respite hours, speech therapy services, special equipment and summer programs...SMD has helped the Pennycooks access a wide variety of services that have made a big difference in their lives.



Rhonda, Lexi and Avril enjoy a little summer sunshine.

*Photo taken by the Brandon Sun.*

“They are a lifeline to the family,” says Rhonda of SMD and Easter Seals. “When I first heard my children had special needs, I was scared. I did not know what programs or support was available.”

“Once SMD got involved with our family, our minds were laid to rest. Thanks to SMD and Easter Seals, we have been able to live our lives just like any other family.”



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I'll make my donation by:

**Cheque:** I've enclosed a cheque payable to “Easter Seals Manitoba” or “SMD Foundation”.

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**Thank you!**

# A Turn “Fur” the Better

## Easter Seals helps get pet grooming booming in Stony Mountain

Judy Smith-Hill had been in accounting for over 30 years when carpal tunnel syndrome and the beginning stages of Osteoporosis began to make working on a computer a painful experience.



Judy with one of her many satisfied customers. Photo taken by Doug Little.

Judy soon found herself facing some tough decisions about her career future. She decided to go into business for herself.

“I found myself laid off and decided it was now or never,” says Judy.

As a person who loves animals and had previous experience grooming pets, Judy decided to go into the grooming business professionally. But she needed a little help getting started.

Fortunately, she was referred to the SMD Interlake Regional Office in Selkirk where she met Rehabilitation Counsellor, Carman Kowalchuk. Carman connected Judy to SMD’s Vocational Rehabilitation Services where she was able to secure a start-up grant.

“Carmen was great,” says Judy. “She got me a grant for \$1,000 which I used towards further training with an international award-winning Master Groomer and a further \$1,000 grant I used toward purchasing more equipment.”

Today, the Doing Time Pet Spa serves approximately 400 customers with new ones coming in every week. It keeps Judy – the owner and sole employee – pretty busy.

“My business has grown steadily in my first year, says Judy. “It started slow and now I get tons of referrals from satisfied customers.”

Not only has Judy discovered a job she loves doing, she’s also received some additional good news.

“My doctor has also informed me that because I am building muscles in my new profession, I have actually slowed down the Osteoporosis,” says Judy. “The muscle takes the weight off of my bones.”

SMD’s Vocational Rehabilitation Services are available thanks in part to the funding provided through Easter Seals Manitoba. Judy believes it’s important to have such organizations in place – because they believe in the people they serve.

“I think these organizations are great and really help people with disabilities,” says Judy. “They really made me feel like I could do anything I set my mind to.”

“I am a firm believer in following your dreams, and organizations such as SMD – and Easter Seals Manitoba – really helped me do that.”

# Food for Thought

## How Easter Seals and SMD helped one consumer find “Good Thymes” at work

“I love it! I can’t say anything more than I love it!”

That’s the way John Legros feels about his job at the Good Thymes Restaurant and Bar in The Pas, Manitoba. And it shows – he’s there when the restaurant opens, helping with food preparation, washing dishes, cleaning...doing whatever needs doing.

He laughs, “Some people think, ‘Oh, man! I have to go to work’ but I don’t have that attitude!”

John’s love of the restaurant business goes way back. John was diagnosed with Cross Paraplegia following a head injury that limited the use of his left arm. He decided to take a restaurants and services course at a local trade school in Ontario. When he moved to Manitoba, he wanted to upgrade his education and experiences by taking a similar program.

He connected with a job hunting program that then referred him to SMD where, thanks in part to funding provided through Easter Seals, he received a Vocational Assessment and began a commercial cooking program at the College University of the North in The Pas.

When the program was discontinued, John didn’t get discouraged. Instead, he decided to

find a way to keep doing what he loved doing. Working with SMD and Easter Seals funding, he was able to secure a training-on-the-job situation at Good Thymes – and he loves everything about the place.

“I really like the environment and the people are really good to me,” says John. “They treat me like one of the family.”

“They opened up their arms, they treat me like an individual. It’s very comforting to know there are people out there who are going to treat me as a person.”

John feels the support Easter Seals provides is an important element in helping people find work and, through work, a different perspective on life.

“I think it’s good to have people occupy their minds and doing things,” says John. “I know I don’t like to stay home and do nothing. I like to get out and prove myself.”

“I think everybody should give people a chance like that.”



John in a rare ‘not busy’ moment. Photo taken by Trent Allen.

# What is Easter Seals?

If someone were to ask... “What is Easter Seals Manitoba?” would you know the answer?

Easter Seals has been active in Manitoba for over 50 years, helping raise millions of dollars to aid programs and services for children and adults with disabilities. These programs and services are carried out by SMD – the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities. Each year, through a variety of Easter Seals initiatives, funds are

raised to support services, programs, public and consumer education, self-help resources, advocacy and research.

The two – Easter Seals and SMD – are intrinsically intertwined. When you hear one, you can’t help but think of the other.



School's in for Cristina.

Photo taken by Doug Little.

# Painting a Picture of Success

## How one consumer brings her artistic visions to life

Art starts with a vision. The artist makes that vision into something real.

That's certainly the case for Cristina Waldner, a young woman with muscular atrophy from Rosenort, Manitoba who has grown up with Easter Seals Manitoba and SMD – and with an interest in art.

“I first became interested in art in Grade six,” recalls Cristina. “My two older sisters were involved in music lessons and sports, and I was beginning to feel like I needed a hobby too.”

“I began taking art lessons with a local artist that year. I realized that this was something I could really enjoy despite my disability.”

A painting Cristina did for her mother received a lot of compliments... and a lot of requests for her work. She made prints of her three favourites, which she sold from her home. Since then, Cristina has displayed and sold pieces at a local café as well as at several art shows at a church in Winnipeg.

“As an artist, I feel like I have learned so much about techniques and styles,” says Cristina. “I would have to say that my drawing skills have improved with time. For the past six years I had been painting primarily with water-

colors. This year I am experimenting with acrylic paint and I'm loving it!”

Just as Cristina's art has evolved, so too has her relationship with SMD. When she was younger, her family received financial assistance for respite and material assistance through Children's Special Services. Now with Adult Services, Cristina is receiving help tapping into educational resources that will help her make a new vision a reality: the vision for her career.

“As a first year student, I am only taking introductory courses,” says Cristina who is attending the Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg. “I am hoping to major in English and work towards a Bachelor of Arts. I am interested in becoming an editor.”

As Cristina continues with her art and her education, she knows that SMD and Easter Seals will continue to be there offering support.

“Throughout the years, SMD (with the help of Easter Seals Manitoba) has funded and supported me through special equipment and countless other resources. Without these organizations, my family and I would be at a loss.”

# The Will to Work

## Where there's a will, there's a way – and support from Easter Seals and SMD

Some people wait for opportunity to come knocking. Others seek out opportunities on their own.

Working as a farmhand at a dairy farm, Tracy Wiens (who has Cerebral Palsy) found the combination of cold, damp weather and varying hours were doing his body more harm than good. He decided to look elsewhere for work and went to SMD for support as he did so.

“We talked about several different options with him as we were developing his vocational plan,” recalls Kelly Gallagher, Tracy's Case Worker at the SMD Eastman Office in Steinbach. “We assisted him with his resumé, updating it and circulating it to various employers in the area to introduce Tracy as well as to make employers aware of the supports that SMD offers in terms of the wage subsidy.”

Tracy decided to focus on lawn care as a new career direction. He felt it was something he could do physically, the seasonal work suited his needs better, and he knew his dedication to quality and precision work would be an asset to any employer.

He decided to approach Topeka Farms – a hog farming facility near Grunthal, Manitoba owned by Lauren and Nancy Wiebe. Lauren was immediately impressed with Tracy's attitude, both towards work and towards life in general.

“When I interviewed Tracy back in 2005, I remember being struck by the fact that he was encouraging to me,” says Lauren. “He's faced a lot of challenges in his life and he still finds the strength to encourage others.”

A three-month training-on-the-job subsidy arranged through SMD only cemented Tracy's hiring. Since then, Tracy has become a valued full-time member of the staff, in charge of all grounds maintenance, from hedge trimming and grass cutting to equipment maintenance and supervising.

While Tracy ultimately found his own path, he also helped open doors for others by providing opportunities to raise awareness about employment services from SMD and Easter Seals.

“When we send out resumé's, an employer may not have something specifically that meets one individual consumer's needs,” says Kelly. “But it's an opportunity for me to talk to employers in the area about the services we have in place and about someone else who might fit an available position.”