

Annual Report

2017-2018



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Message from the Chair

On behalf of the student researchers, core members, families, staff, supporters, funders, and board of connectors, I am pleased to welcome you to our Annual General Meeting.

Ten years ago, Astonished! began as a conversation that centred around equality, dignity, and hope. Young adults living with complex disAbilities and their families understood that providing choice was the best way to ensure one's strengths, dreams, and needs could be acknowledged, expressed, and realized. Years of passion and determination have led us to this AGM today.

The success of Astonished! is a result of countless supporters. But it can also be attributed to the leadership within the organization. Bonnie Cummings-Vickaryous, Ella McIntyre, and Katherine Taylor have helped to transform a vision into reality. From my observations I can tell you that the key to this success is building relationships with young adults, families, and companions. The foundation of

each relationship is comprised of respect, dignity, and presence. They have modelled these practices to numerous University of Regina students who have selected Astonished! as their capstone learning experience to complete their degree program. As a faculty member at the University, this is what makes me the most proud; young professionals will inform their future colleagues about strengths, independence, and choice.

Congratulations to everyone!

Warmly,

Brenda



Ian, Wilder & Brenda

Message from the Executive Director

Dear Friends of Astonished!

December 2017 marked my 5-year anniversary with Astonished!. As I reflect on this time I am thankful to be part of this grass-roots user led organization. Over the past 5 years we have seen growth in our operations, an increased presence at the University of Regina, and increased engagement with the community. I am proud of our growth and our collective efforts to stay true to the vision and values of Astonished!.

I am happy to report that 2017-2018 was another great year! Noteworthy accomplishments include:

- continuing to offer 3 person-centered programs in the areas of self-discovery, recreation/leisure, and teaching/learning which respond directly to Core Members' strengths, dreams, and needs
- welcoming 8 new Core Members
- engaging in research, teaching, and learning opportunities
 - developing and delivering presentations to multiple University of Regina classes
 - presenting twice at the Accessibility and Inclusivity in the Arts: Mini Symposium
 - presenting Inclusivity Unmasked! Students with Complex Physical Disabilities and Performativity at the Pacific Rim International Conference on Disability and Diversity
 - publishing Inclusivity Unmasked! Students with complex physical disAbilities and Performativity in Ubiquity The Journal of Literature, Literacy, and the Arts, special issue
 - working with Dr. Johner on a research project entitled Building Bridges with Digital Story Telling
 - working with Dr. Rossow-Kimball on a research project entitled Creating Spaces for Young Adults with Complex Physical DisAbilities to Communicate Strengths
- managing the 5th Annual Grow Gratitude campaign, the 3rd Annual Walk and Roll, and multiple fundraising activities including the Annual Spring Gala
- being selected as the charitable recipient by three community groups (100 Women Who Care, Jaleta Pacers, Justice Studies Student Society)

In all that we do, Astonished! keeps the focus on building a culture that is grounded in the strengths perspective and dedicated to the motto 'better together'. We continue to be honoured by the support of the Astonished! Community. I thank you for your active involvement in enabling the work of Astonished! and ultimately the work of the Astonished! Core Members. I encourage you to share the story of Astonished! with your friends, family, and work place.

With Gratitude,

Bonnie



Bonnie, Rebekah & Jenna

Many Thanks

Astonished! Communications

Brenda MacLauchlan

Board of Connectors

Dr. Brenda Rossow-Kimball - Chair
Dr. Randy Johner - Vice Chair
Mitchell Rice - Treasurer
Karen Clark - Secretary
Joy Lindenbach - Mentor
Alykhan Bhanji - Member
Taylor Carson - Member

Finance Committee

Sandra Brandt
Bonnie Cummings
Mitchell Rice

Global Fundraising Committee

Ruth Blaser
Rhea Boysen
Bonnie Cummings-Vickaryous
Heather Dorgan
Dr. Brenda Rossow-Kimball

Program Advisory Committee

Kelsey Culbert
Bonnie Cummings-Vickaryous
Judy Humphries
Dr. Randy Johner
Brenda MacLauchlan
Katherine Taylor

Spring Gala Committee

Rhea Boysen
Bonnie Cummings-Vickaryous
Deb Ottenbreit
Dr. Brenda Rossow-Kimball
Katherine Taylor

*Thank you to our 2017-2018 program
volunteers and placement students!*



Jessica & Elisa (Placement Students)

Happy 10th Anniversary Astonished!

Where do you start when there is no map for the road ahead? Wherever you can!

Astonished! began in a creative stew of yearning ... a group of people wishing and hoping for a good future after high school. Young adults with complex physical disAbilities were Canadian pioneers in education and social inclusion. But at 22 (or when they graduated from secondary school) there were few opportunities for them in community.

We dreamed and longed for places and opportunities where the capacities, needs and dreams of young men and women who live with complex physical disAbilities were seen, known and respected. We dreams also of a community where everyone belongs.

Astonished! started with a gathering of *Vision Keepers*. *Vision Keepers* is a lofty and yes worthy name for a group of friends with good hearts and loads of love, creativity and commitment.

The name for what we were dreaming had already landed from these lines by poet Mary Oliver and her poem *Messenger*.

*Are my boots old? Is my coat torn?
Am I no longer young and still not half-perfect? Let me
keep my mind on what matters,
which is my work,*

*which is mostly standing still and learning to be
astonished.*



Cherie Westmoreland & Ruth Blaser (2008 dreaming)

In the early years of Astonished! we named ourselves as a grass roots, community-based, user-led charity guided by some basic and essential principles. Here are just a few ...

Astonished! focuses on young women and men with complex physical disAbilities and their particular place in a vibrant and diverse community.

Astonished! believes **inclusion is individual**, and starts with the dreams, strengths, and needs of the individual.

Astonished! affirms interdependence.

Astonished! believes in building and nurturing **respectful, resilient communities**.

Astonished! works to create dignified spaces and places of belonging.

Consensus decision-making is a key element of our governance.

As in any human endeavour mistakes have been made and great things accomplished. All in all Astonished! is thriving.

Looking back we had no idea A! would play such a significant role in the life of the U of R and vice-versa.

We also see how fortunate, wise, and lucky we have been in our staffing choices and their dedication.

It's time for the A! Community of Core Members, Families and Friends, Staff, Board and Committee Members, Donors, the University of Regina and Partners to celebrate that we've made it this far and to know what we know which is... *We are Better Together*. And ... here we go into the next decade.

Ruth N. Blaser
A! Volunteer and a Founding Member

The Big Sky Centre and Being Astonished! Inc Overview

The Big Sky Centre for Learning and Being Astonished! Inc. is a Registered Charity based in Regina, Saskatchewan. We work in **inclusive community** to address barriers facing young adults with complex physical disAbilities (Core Members) by creating opportunities for teaching and learning; social, recreational and cultural engagement; and for employment and housing.

We work towards inclusive community where young adults with complex physical disAbilities can share their dreams, explore their strengths, and lead others to a more authentically inclusive society.

Over 50 adults with complex physical disAbilities make up our 'Core Membership' and represent Astonished!

Astonished! Programs

1. The Astonished! Teaching and Learning Centre (A!TLC)
2. The Astonished! Social Club,
3. Summer Literacy Program,
4. Path to Future Endeavours.

Astonished Guiding Principles and Values

The **Astonished Guiding Principles and Values**, developed in the early years, and always a work in progress, continue to guide us:

Who we are and how we work together

- Astonished! focuses on **young adults** with complex physical disAbilities and **their particular place in a vibrant and diverse community**.
- Astonished! celebrates **creativity, capacity, and diversity**.
- Astonished! believes that inclusion is individual, and starts with the dreams, strengths, and needs of the individual.
- For Astonished! inclusion means we are **better together**, and is always a **work in progress**.
- Astonished! affirms **interdependence**.

Astonished! Values Community

- Astonished! believes in building and nurturing **respectful, resilient community** and a culture of inclusion and respect.
- Astonished! works to create **spaces and places of belonging** where all ages, abilities, races, incomes, genders, and sexual orientations can offer their gifts and time, and receive the gifts and nurture of others through living, working and playing together.
- Astonished! **respects Earth and the natural world** which offers teachings about resilience,

change, diversity, healing, and community that contribute to our vision and work.

- Astonished! **encourages and supports arts and artists**. We live out inclusion and accessibility in language and communication, facilities and activities, while we build and sustain the well-being of community.

Consensus

- Astonished! respects our humanness; **we try our best, learn from mistakes**, and hang in with each other through rough times as well as easy times.
- Astonished! makes decisions by **consultation and consensus**.



2017-2018 Program Highlights

Astonished Teaching and Learning Centre

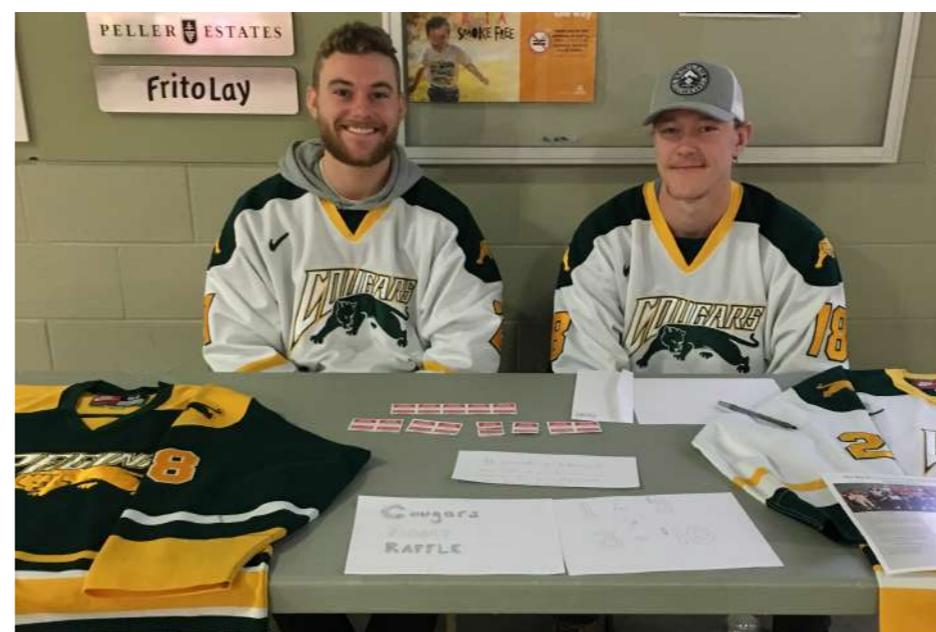
A!TLC is a place where Core Members become Student Researchers. Established in January of 2013, A!TLC provides unique opportunities designed around each individual's particular strengths, dreams, and needs. Astonished staff, volunteers, and placement students support each Student Researcher as they determine and navigate a program PATH or areas of interest unique to them. Additional program content is designed around common areas of interest. Further, Student Researchers are leaders and work with the University Community in research and teaching about disAbility and inclusion.

2017-2018 A!TLC Highlights

- completed a book club session
- participated in a mental health mini workshop series
- participated in a 3 part nutrition series,
- participated in a 3 part blogging/vlogging seminar
- participated in a 3 part creative writing workshop
- developed and delivered presentations in the Faculties of Education, Kinesiology and Health Studies, and Social Work
- weekly Yoga sessions co-facilitated by Student Researcher Rebekah Lindenbach and Ruth Blaser from 'Yoga for Every Body';
- mentored in a graduate Social Work course
- dedicated time for each Student Researcher to work on individualized goals and areas of interest as highlighted in each Student Researcher's submission.



2017-2018 A!TLC Student Researchers



Kin 342 students working on their Walk and Roll class project

A!TLC Student Researcher Submissions

Kelsey Culbert

My name is Kelsey Culbert. Most people who know me well would say that I am a busy individual who is passionate, determined and always happy. I think it is fair to say that I go after what I want and I work hard to accomplish my goals. A!TLC enables me to think about my goals and identify how to achieve those goals. Over the past year my goals have been centered around: a) motivational speaking and writing, b) teaching others about disAbility, c) being involved in Campus for All and d) being an active member of 'Listen to Dis Voice' and 'Other Ordinary Theatre Company. To work towards these goals of I have delivered multiple presentations to various classes at the University of Regina, created and performed 'Neither Heroes Nor Ordinary People' and 'Mine to Have'. I am currently touring Saskatchewan performing Neither Heroes nor Ordinary People. I will be going into my third year of Campus for All and I will be recognized as a senior student.



Sean Davis

Hi, my name is Sean and I am a Student Researcher at Astonished! Over the past year, I have been developing a lot of my PATH work. Some of those things include improving navigation skills, practicing communication skills, becoming more assertive, and increasing social activities - like scheduling dates with my friends and my parents. I have also completed a few presentations for different classes at the university. Some of my bigger interests are in sports. I am a big fan of the Regina Pats, the Saskatchewan Roughriders, the Toronto Blue Jays, and the Toronto Maple Leafs. Back in February 2016 I had moved into Cheshire. Next February will be 3 years. Since moving in I have been settling in and am still trying to make my room feel more like my own. Over the past year, some of my favourite events at Astonished! were going to the sports games with my friends and going to the Adult Science Night at the Saskatchewan Science Centre.



Kennen Dorgan

My name is Kennen Dorgan, I'm from Grenfell Sk. In the past year, I have spent a lot of time working on literacy and learning about technology. My goal is to have my own cell phone so I can text my friends and family. To achieve that I have been learning to read. I've also been learning about different apps and functions of cell phones. I've had fun practicing and learning about photography - this year I helped organize a special seminar on light photography. As well, I participated in video camp and learned how to make my own videos. I enjoyed doing presentations that help other university students learn about the strength based perspective. I shared with them some stories and told them about the resources I use in my day to day life. And I worked hard at Astonished! events like Walk and Roll and the spring gala to help raise funds so Astonished! can continue to help me work toward my goals and dreams.



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Kaitlyn Hoar

Hi! My name is Kaitlyn Hoar and I am a student researcher for Astonished and I am also on the leadership team as I enjoy and look forward to planning and attending social events I am currently planning a volunteer appreciation evening with Bonnie and we currently formed a small committee to plan a steak night fundraiser or come up with other fundraising ideas I planned a baby shower for my good friend Courtney who had adorable twin girls. I also once again acted as a mentor in Dr Randy Johner's class and have participated in other presentations

As some of you may know I love sports Hockey, football, baseball are my favourite I have attended quite a few pats and cougars games and now looking forward to football and baseball. I also made some new good friends and look forward to more planning and social events or just hanging out with friends



Rebekah Lindenbach

When Rebekah Lindenbach is really comfortable with you she lets her wit and humour shine.

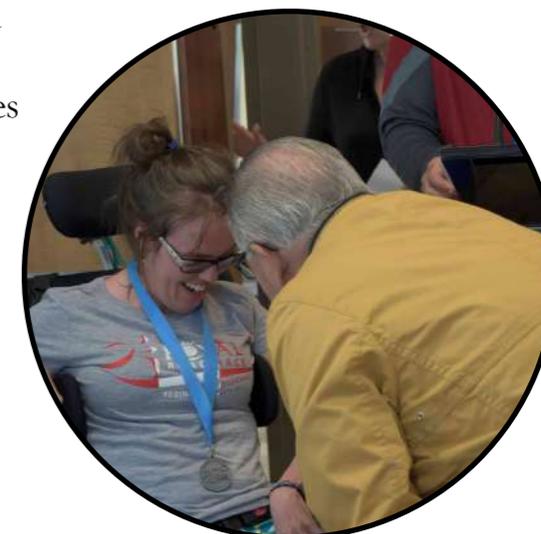
Rebekah likes to plan, and she is excited about her travel plans for July 2018. She will be visiting Banff and Jasper National Parks in a wheelchair accessible RV. Rebekah, and her aunties Ruth and Brenda, have been designing their accessible unit in Prairie Spruce Commons Cohousing. They plan to move in at the end of 2018.

This year, Rebekah has participated in two research projects at the University of Regina: Building Bridges with Digital Stories, and Strengths Based Perspectives. Rebekah and her long-time friend Kaitlyn Hoar have created a teaching video on Communication Without Speech, and they look forward to sharing it with students and faculty at the University of Regina.



Avery Ottenbreit

My name is Avery Ottenbreit and I am a student researcher with Astonished! My friends and family would describe me as sassy, funny, kind, and an animal lover. This past year for my PATH I have been working on mental health, yoga, and blogging. I have started writing my own blog, I attend Yoga for Every Body once a week and I have been exploring different apps about mediation. I am very interested in how yoga can help those who struggle with mental health. My favourite activity with A!TLC was baking cookies at Orange Tree village.



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Landon

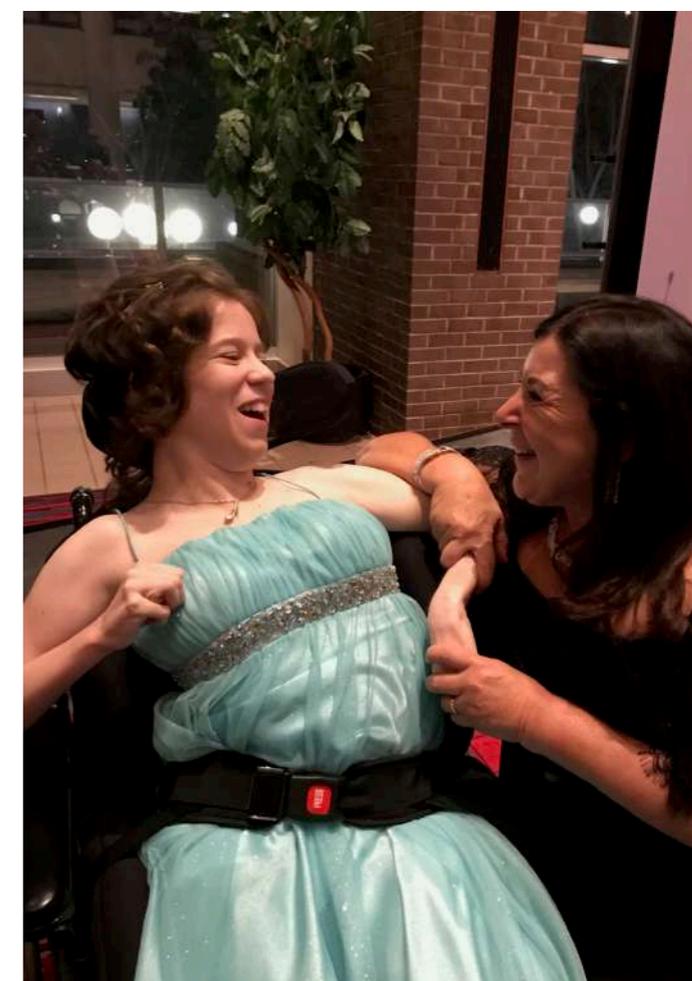
Hi my name is Landon, and I am a Student Researcher with Astonished!. Since I have started with A!, I have been working on my personal goal planning, attending program, and working on my literacy skills. One of my favourite programs that Astonished! offers is A!TLC. My favourite part of A!TLC are the PATH days, because I get time to work on my goal plans and I get to make new friends with all of the volunteers that come through. A!TLC also supports me when I have other work and goals to achieve in my everyday life. I also love going to Roughrider games, partying with my friends, and I am always open to creating new friendships. One of my favourite Social Club events would have to be going to Wascana Park, or going to the University of Regina Cougar games.



Social Work Mentorship Group



Yoga for Every Body



Kennen and President Timmons

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Summer Literacy

Astonished! is researching, developing, and delivering literacy services specific to the strengths, dreams, and needs of Core Members. In the Summer of 2013, Astonished! offered a pilot program to explore and respond to the strengths, dreams, and needs of 5 Core members. The program is now offered annually.

Summer 2017 had 11 Core Members, with 1 core member receiving one-on-one literacy lessons and 10 core members receiving group lessons. Through fun, creative, and age appropriate activities, program content focused on reading comprehension, retention, creative writing, financial literacy, technology, and social media.

Program sessions took place both inside a traditional classroom as well as outside at the University of Regina. In addition, an optional evening literacy session took place at local community establishments and parks. There, the Core Members participating in the program enjoyed various activities that use literacy such as trending apps and games, board games and using numerical skills.

For additional support we hired two summer students to assist with program development, implementation, and evaluation. We are pleased to be offering the program again in summer 2018 with 11 Core Members.



2017-2018 Summer Literacy

Social Club

On a monthly basis Astonished! offers an inclusive, social recreation, and/or physically active event to the Astonished! Core Members. This program is carried out through the vision and planning of the Astonished! Leadership Team. Volunteers assist with event implementation.

Events take place at various local businesses and establishments, as well as at the University of Regina. These events provide a great avenue for building inclusive community as core members gather with and meet new friends; potential Core Members have a chance to see what Astonished! is all about; and university students have a chance to form meaningful relationships and gain experience.

2017-2018 Events

- A! Games Night
- Variety Night: 'Our Favourite Things'
- A! Day at Wascana Park
- Regina Red Sox Game
- Annual Summer BBQ
- Yoga For Every Body (send pic)
- Drinks & Appetizers at Cathedral Social Hall
- Cougar Hockey Game
- Holiday Feast
- Pizza & Movie Night
- Regina Little Theatre
- St. Patrick's Day Party at Western Pizza



Continuing to build on the A! Dance Project, a pilot dreamed up by Jake Sawa and presented to Astonished!, we continued to offer dance sessions throughout the 2017-2018.

From January – May we collaborated with the City of Regina to offer dance sessions through the City of Regina's What's Your Style Dance Night. This collaboration continued to see Core Members have the the opportunity to explore their own rhythm and movements in traditional and non-traditional ways and brought increased awareness of our strengths to the community.



Astonished! and the University of Regina

Through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the University of Regina, Astonished! and the University collaborate on research and inclusion opportunities. This reciprocal partnership provides great opportunities for young adults with complex physical disAbilities and the U of R student body, faculty, and staff to learn from each other.

We demonstrate a model for social inclusion in an accessible post-secondary education environment.

Over the past year Astonished! and the University have continued to work together on common areas of interest within the framework of the University of Regina's strategic plan and Astonished!'s mandate. The MOU enables Astonished! and the University to work together to:

- develop inclusion workshops for students enrolled in the Faculties of Education, Social Work, Journalism and Kinesiology and Health Studies
- create, implement, and evaluate teaching, learning, and research opportunities related to social inclusion and other areas of mutual interest with students, staff, and faculty
- create opportunities for students and faculty to increase their personal and professional capacities to learn, work, and play with people who experience disAbilities

**Better
Together**

- ensure that the U of R is supportive in locating, confirming, and sustaining accessible physical campus space to be used by Astonished! for its programming



Kelsey & Dr. Johner (Accessibility and Inclusivity in the Arts: Mini Symposium)

2017-2018 Highlights

- welcoming and mentoring 9 practicum/placement students from numerous faculties including the Faculties of Education, Kinesiology and Health Studies, Nursing, and Social Work
- welcoming and shaping numerous student volunteers
- presenting in Kin 120, 341, and 342; ECS 200 and EPSY 400
- collaborating with 12 groups of Kin 342 students on the 2017 Walk and Roll
- presenting twice at the Accessibility and Inclusivity in the Arts: Mini Symposium
- continuing to work with Dr. Johner on a research project entitled Inclusion Unmasked
- being chosen by a team of investigators to be the Community Based Partner for a research project partially funded by Mitacs
- securing funding from the George Reed Centre for the Mitacs' project
- working with Dr. Johner on a research project entitled Building Bridges with Digital Story Telling
- working with Dr. Rossow-Kimball on a research project entitled Creating Spaces for Young Adults with Complex Physical DisAbilities to Communicate Strengths

Community Profile & Fundraising

The Astonished! Board of Connectors and Staff are responsible for raising the annual budget. The Global Fundraising Committee along with the Board of Connectors have set a goal to work towards building an operating reserve of \$200,000.

We continue to build awareness of Astonished! in the community and at the University of Regina.

Through the persistent work of the Global Fundraising committee, staff, many core members and their families and with support from our long-time donors, new donors, and the community we were able to meet the 2017-2018 budget and build towards establishing a healthy operating reserve.

2017-2018 Fundraising Strategies

- 100 Woman Who Care Donation (\$16,100)
- Royal Road Race (\$12,040)
- Justice Studies Student Society Justice For All Fundraiser (\$880)
- M&M Meats BBQ Fundraiser (\$1,375)
- 2017 Fall Grow Gratitude Campaign (\$15,357)
- 3rd Annual Walk and Roll (\$21,485)
- Grants
- Pizza and Pasta Fundraiser (\$2,055)
- 6th Annual Spring Gala (\$48,377)
- Grants & Foundation Support
 - J.B.L Foundation
 - G. Murray and Edna Forbes Grant at the South Saskatchewan Community Foundation
 - Summer Jobs Grant
 - 2 grants from the Community Initiatives Fund

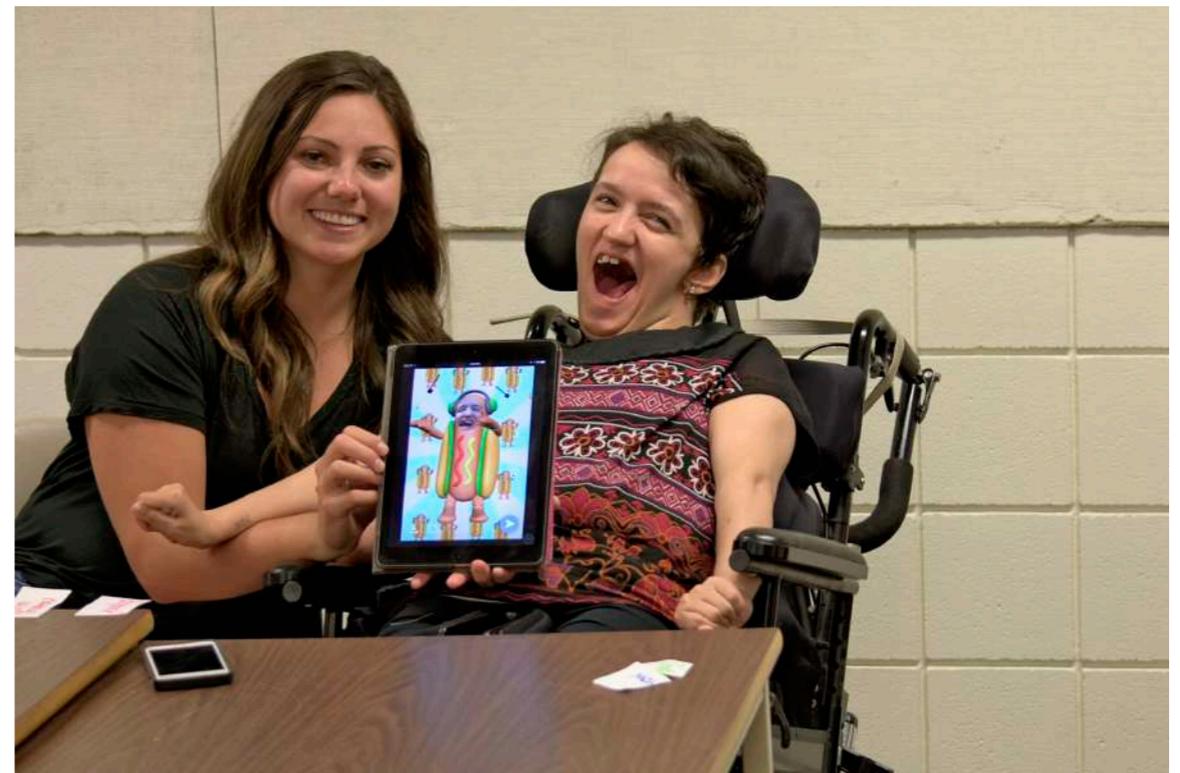


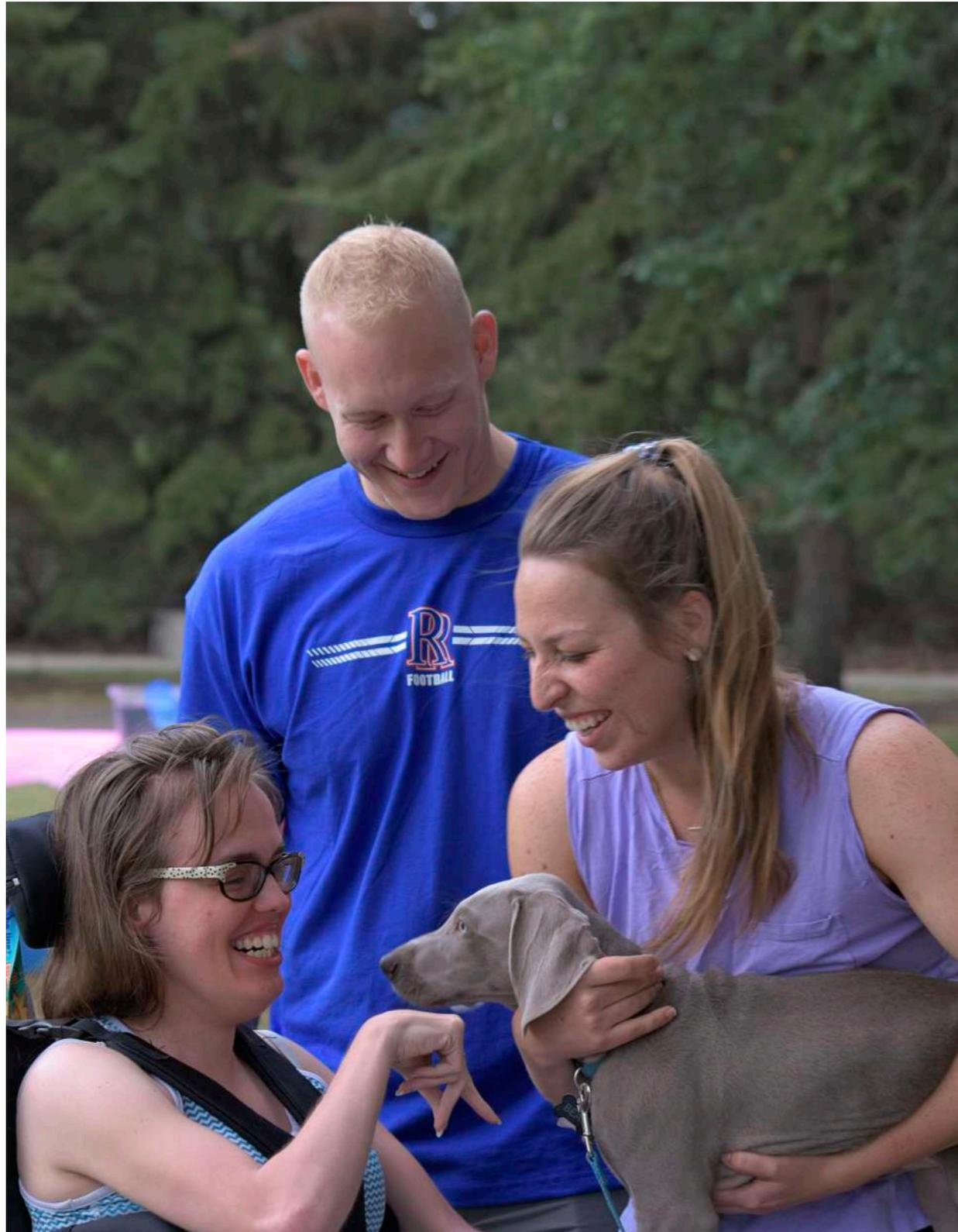
3rd Annual Walk and Roll

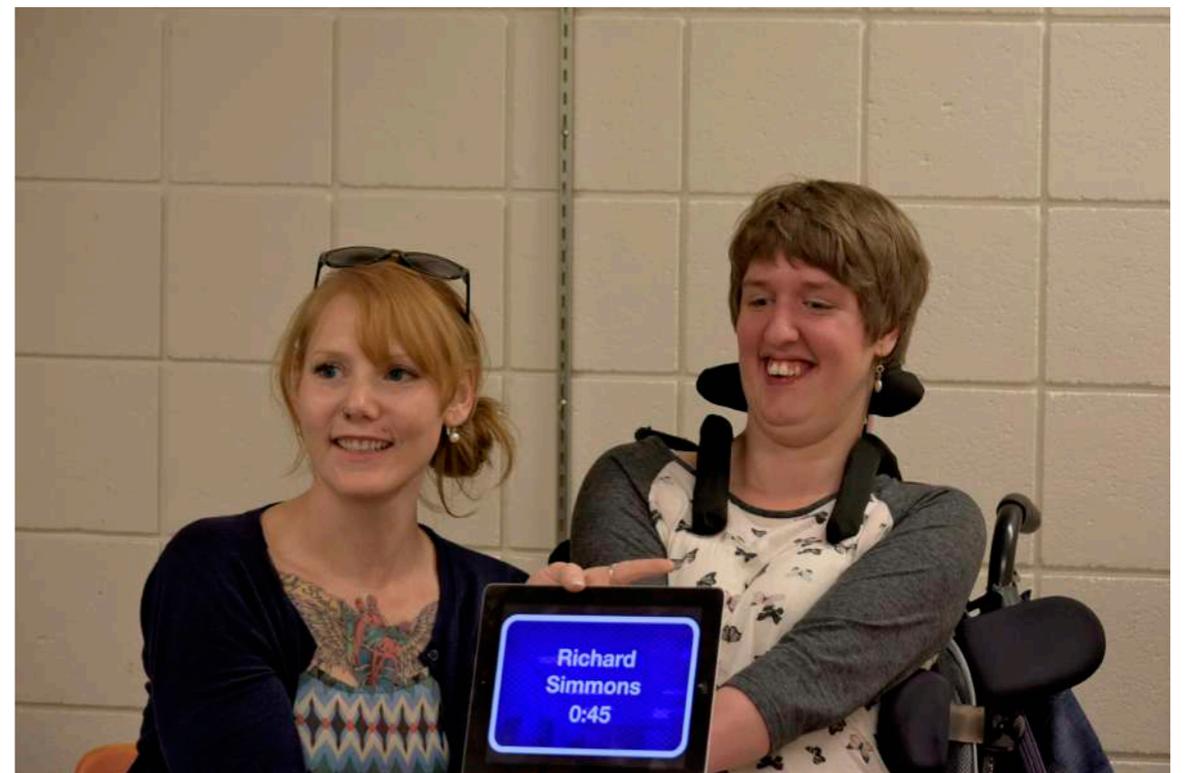
2017-2018 Donor Numbers

- 520 Donors
- 11 Monthly Donors

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