



# Annual Report 2015-2016





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## Message from the Board Chair

It is a privilege to serve as the Chair of the Board of Connectors for Astonished! I am grateful for the opportunity to learn from student researchers, core members, families, staff and volunteers, donors and funders, and the many other A! members and supporters. I am proud of the successes of the organization as we work towards building

a more inclusive community, acknowledge the right for everyone to compose their lives with meaning and dignity, and continue our work that is rooted in goodness and equality.

## Greetings from the Interim Manager

I couldn't imagine feeling more welcomed and supported coming into this role as the Interim Manager while Bonnie is on her maternity leave. The Astonished! community has made this experience wonderful and for that I thank you all!

This year, there have been so many noteworthy accomplishments of the Astonished! community:

# Many Thanks

## *Board of Directors*

Dr. Brenda Rossow-Kimball, Chair  
Dr. Randy Johner, Vice Chair  
Ruth Blaser, Past Chair  
Joy Lindenbach, Treasurer  
Karen Clark, Secretary  
May Desnomie, Member

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## *Astonished! / University of Regina Working Group*

Ruth Blaser  
Doug Cripps  
Bonnie Cummings-Vickaryous  
Dr. Randy Johner  
Dr. James McNinch  
Teri Phillips  
Dr. Brenda Rossow-Kimball  
Faith Savarese

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## *Finance Committee*

Sandra Brandt  
Rhea Boysen  
Joy Lindenbach

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## *Global Fundraising Committee*

Ruth Blaser  
Rhea Boysen  
Heather Dorgan  
Brenda Rossow-Kimball

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## *Spring Fundraiser Event Committee*

Rhea Boysen  
Lori Bresciani  
Deb Ottenbreit  
Brenda Rossow-Kimball



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## *Program Advisory Committee*

Kelsey Culbert  
Rhea Boysen  
Judy Humphries  
Dr. Randy Johner  
Katherine Taylor  
Brenda MacLauchlan

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## *Astonished! Communications*

Brenda MacLauchlan

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A very large **THANK YOU**  
to Placement Students  
& Program Volunteers.  
We couldn't do it  
without you!



## Staff

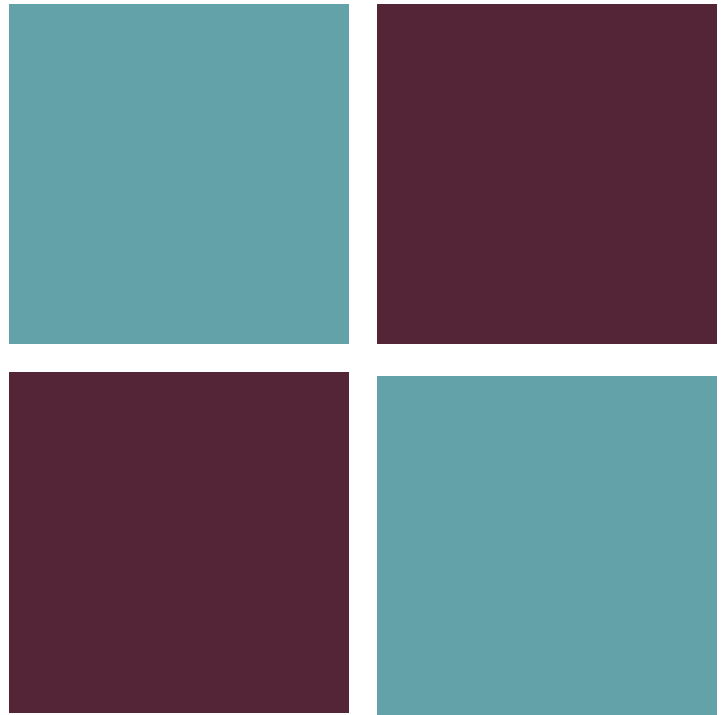
### Rhea Boysen

Rhea is from the small town of Gronlid, Saskatchewan and has lived in Saskatoon, Orlando and Germany before calling Regina her home base. She is a Kinesiology and Health Studies graduate and will be continuing her education in the fall of 2016 by beginning her Master's degree in the Faculty of Kinesiology. During Rhea's undergraduate degree program, she volunteered with Astonished! for a course and continued to volunteer with A! even after the course's completion. Rhea was so pleased when Astonished! asked her to manage the organization in the interim while Bonnie is away on her maternity leave. Rhea loves to cook, fish and spend time with her family.



### Katherine Taylor

Katherine comes from a very small town/farm in Saskatchewan, and graduated from the Faculty of Kinesiology in the fall of 2014. She completed her high school education in Yorkton, and then soon moved to Regina to continue her education at the University of Regina. After convocation, Katherine decided to venture out of Regina to test other opportunities. After receiving her certification as a Certified Exercise Physiologist, she continued to work at a physiotherapy clinic in Saskatoon. After returning to Regina in the fall of 2015, Katherine was ecstatic to find an opportunity with Astonished!. Katherine is passionate about giving back to her community, and helping others. She describes working for A! as a privilege, and a truly inspirational experience. In her spare time, Katherine is an avid hunter, enjoys travelling, exploring the great outdoors, and camping in the summertime with her boyfriend, Brenden.



## The Big Sky Centre for Learning 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.

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, 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 decision by **consultation and consensus**.

Currently, we offer four programs: the Astonished! Teaching and Learning Centre, the Astonished! Social Club, Path to Future Endeavors, and the Summer Literacy program. Please see pages 9 through 12 to learn more about our programs

### Our Numbers

#### We are:

- 38 Active Core Members
- 107 donors 2015-2016.
- 327 E-Newsletter subscribers



# 2015-2016 Astonished Program Areas

## 1. The Astonished! Teaching and Learning Centre (A!TLC)

The A!TLC is a place where young adults with complex physical disAbilities become Student Researchers.



Established in January 2013 with 3 Student Researchers, A!TLC provides unique opportunities designed around each individual's particular strengths, dreams, and needs. Some dreams of the Student Researchers include 'becoming a fiction and non-fiction writer', 'learning new things to help me move forward in my life', 'being part of the university life', 'increasing employment related skills' 'self growth and discovery', 'having the opportunity to socialize with peers my age' and 'teaching others about the experience of disAbility'.

Astonished! staff support each Student Researcher as they determine and navigate a program PATH (Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope) unique to them. The work within A!TLC is designed around each Student Researcher's PATH and their identified strengths, dreams, and needs. In addition, Student Researchers are leaders and work with the university community in research, teaching, and delivering presentations about disAbility and inclusion.

A!TLC highlights and accomplishments from the 2015-2016 year include:

- recruiting and training 3 practicum students and numerous volunteers
- welcoming presenters into A!TLC
- contributing to a research project lead by A!TLC Student Researcher Kelsey Culbert and Social Work Professor Dr. Randy Johner
- taking part in workshops led by Astonished! staff
- completing 2 PATH updates, and 1 Strengths Dreams and Needs Interview
- Welcoming a 6<sup>th</sup> Student Researcher
- Implementing a pilot adapted Yoga program, led by Rebekah Lindenbach and Ruth Blaser
- Maintaining a caring, safe and supportive environment for each Student Researcher, Astonished! staff, friends and volunteers



## Astonished Program Areas Cont'd.

- maintaining a caring, safe, and supportive environment for each Student

### 2. Summer Literacy

Astonished! is researching, developing, and delivering literacy services/programs specific to the strengths, dreams, and needs of Core Members.

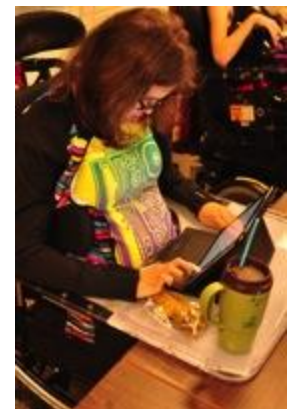


In the summer of 2013 Astonished! offered a pilot program to explore and respond to the strengths, dreams, and needs of 5 Core Members. Some of their diverse literacy dreams included 'developing pre-literacy skills', 'enhancing existing skills', 'having more time to read and/or use various forms of technology', and 'increasing numeracy skills'.

In the summer of 2014, Astonished! once again offered a Literacy Program to explore and respond to the literacy strengths, dreams, and needs of our Core Members. This summer session had 7 students, with 1 student receiving one-on-one pre-literacy lessons, and 6 students receiving group lessons. We also had 1 Astonished! Core Member with us in a volunteer capacity. For additional support Astonished! hired a summer student to assist with developing and implementing the literacy program.



*The program is now offered annually July through August, 2 afternoons a week. We are happy to be offering this program again in summer 2016, welcoming 10 literacy students.*





# Astonished Program Areas Cont'd.

## 3. Astonished! Social Club

Astonished! works with a 5 member planning team (The Astonished! Leadership Team) comprised of vibrant young adults with and without complex physical disAbilities to plan and carry out monthly inclusive, social, recreational, and physically active events for the Astonished! Core Members, volunteers, and the wider community. Astonished! staff mentor this team to increase their leadership and program planning skills. The team actively recruits and orients university students (volunteers) to 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 join in on the fun and see what Astonished! is all about, and university students have a chance to be part of a community, form meaningful relationships, and gain valuable experience in inclusion.

Over the past year the monthly events offered by the Social Club included:

- Day at the Mall
- Theatre Show at the Artesian
- A! Summer BBQ
- A! Dance Project
- A! Halloween Howl – a fundraising event
- Cougar Hockey Games
- A! Holiday Feast
- A! Hawaiian Dance Party
- Variety Night
- A! Winter Games



Through a few of these monthly events new partnerships were formed. The Astonished! Leadership Team partnered with the Sask Abilities SLYP-Out Program, as well as two excellent Kinesiology Students to offer our



## Astonished Program Areas Cont'd.



### 4. PATH To Future Endeavors

Astonished! is currently determining a way to learn more about Core Members strengths, dreams, and needs as they relate to vocation. Over the past year we have worked with 4 Core Members to begin supporting their vocation dreams:

- continuing to partner with a private organization to support the employment dreams of Core Member Ryan Ross who lives in Regina and is a resident at Wascana Rehabilitation Centre. Ryan holds the position of Astonished! Facebook Manager. With this position, Ryan is responsible for the content that appears on the Astonished! Facebook page
- contracting with the Astonished! Leadership Team to plan the monthly Social Club Events. For the 2015-2016 year, 2 Core Members were on the team
- Kelsey continues to add experience to her growing resume by serving on the Astonished! Program Advisory Committee. Here, Kelsey is learning skills related to leadership, strategic planning, decision making, and promotion



# Astonished! & 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 to identify common areas of interest within the framework of the University of Regina's strategic plan, peyak aski kikawinaw and Astonished's mandate. This spring we successfully developed a new 5 year MOU. The MOU will see Astonished! and the University of Regina working together to:

- develop Inclusion Education 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;
- 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

## Fundraising

The Astonished! Board and Staff are responsible for raising the annual budget. Fundraising strategies for the past year included:

- 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Fall Grow Gratitude Campaign
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Halloween Howl (ticketed event)
- 4<sup>th</sup> Annual 'Wings on our Wheels Astonished! in Flight' Spring Fundraising Gala
- Community Living Service Delivery Individual Support Contracts
- grants through the Community Initiative Fund
- foundation support
- general donations
- Permanent Endowment and Agency Flow Through Fund at SSCF
- Astonished! Legacy Program





## Fundraising Cont'd.

We invite you to help us reach our annual 2016-2017 goal of \$200,000.

### **General Donor options include:**

1. **Donate Now!** Find the card on your table to fill out to donate either by cheque, cash or credit card.
2. **A Cheque and/or Series of Post-dated Cheques to Astonished! Inc.** mailed to The Big Sky Centre for Learning and Being Astonished! Inc., University of Regina, 3737 Wascana Parkway, Regina SK. S4S 0A2
3. **A Pre-Authorized Monthly Donation** (contact Rhea, rhea.boysen@beingastonished.com)
4. **An online donation through Canada Helps** (visit <http://www.beingastonished.com/donors/donation-options/>)
5. **A donation to our Permanent Endowment Fund** (Rhea, rhea.boysen@beingastonished.com)
6. **Astonished Legacy Program** (contact Ruth, ruth.blaser@astonished.com)

Our Global Fundraising Committee has worked diligently to identify fundraising strategies for the upcoming fiscal year. Keep your eye on our website, E-Newsletter, and your email.

## Astonished Goals 2013 - March 30 2016 Update

In March of 2013, 19 members from the Astonished! Community gathered to review and celebrate accomplishments and to identify key goals to strengthen Astonished! in a time of growth. From this meeting multiple goals were born to take us to spring 2016.

### **Program Goals**

#### **Astonished! Teaching and Learning Centre (A!TLC)**

1. The A!TLC will grow to a maximum number of 12 Student Researchers over the next 4-5 years (2018)

*The Program Advisory Committee will continue to monitor and discuss the growth of the A!TLC.*

2. The A!TLC Steering Committee together with the Board will develop a clear, fair, and transparent process for application, selection, and welcoming to the A!TLC

*Completed Spring 2015*

3. The A!TLC will welcome one more Student Researcher in the fall of 2013

*Astonished welcomed two Core Members as A!TLC Student Researchers in the fall of 2013.*

4. The A!TLC will consider welcoming an additional Student Researcher in early 2014

*Astonished! welcomed a 6<sup>th</sup> Student Researcher fall 2015.*

## **Literacy**

1. Astonished! will develop competencies in Literacy Services for people with complex physical disAbilities over the next five years

*Astonished continues to develop and refine skills in this area.*

2. Astonished! will research, develop, and deliver Literacy Programs/services specific to the needs, dreams, and interests of Core Members

*Astonished! offered a pilot literacy project summer 2013. We will offer it for a 4<sup>th</sup> time this coming summer.*

3. Astonished! will offer a summer pilot literacy program in the summer of 2013 to begin identifying and exploring the needs, dreams and interests of program participants. The pilot project will be open to a maximum of 5 core members

*Astonished offered the pilot program to 5 Core Members summer 2013.*

4. At the conclusion and evaluation of the summer pilot literacy program Astonished! Staff will make recommendations to the board for future literacy programming

*The literacy program has become an Annual summer program.*

## **Employment Readiness Programs**

1. Astonished! will continue to research and work with the Core Members to identify needed services to support the employment dreams and needs of the Core Membership

*The Board of Directors with input from Astonished! staff have made the decision to support a few Core Members with their vocation dreams. When our capacity increases, we will look to expand the PATH to Future Endeavors program area.*

2. Astonished will continue to contract a 5 member team (the Astonished! Leadership Team) to plan, implement and evaluate a monthly social and recreational, leisure, cultural event for the Astonished! membership and community

*Each year, Astonished! continues to contract a 5 member team to plan and implement the Social Club program (under the mentorship of the Astonished! Program Coordinator). For the 2015-2016 fiscal year, 2 Core Members served on the team.*

## **Social Club**

1. Monthly social/recreational events will be planned, implemented and evaluated by the Astonished Leadership team for the Astonished! membership and community

*12 monthly events were planned and implemented during the 2015-2016 fiscal year.*

2. Astonished! will continue to explore and identify the social and recreational needs of the membership and work to meet these needs through the Social Club

During the 2015-2016 fiscal year, through the Social Club, Astonished! sporadically offered the A! Dance Project in addition to the regular monthly Social Club offering.

### **Additional Programming**

1. Astonished will explore interest, needs and possibilities for additional programming to be offered as early as summer 2014 (recreation, housing, literacy, employment etc.)

*Working within our current capacity and to ensure sustainability we have not increased program offerings.*

### **Teaching, Learning and Research**

1. Astonished! will continue to develop capacity and expertise in teaching and learning

Over the past three years Astonished has worked with numerous practicum students and volunteers, Student Researchers have worked as Mentors in a Social Work class, we have delivered lectures focusing on various disAbility issues as well as participated in workshops. As we engage in each opportunity we continue to develop our capacity and refine our expertise.

2. Astonished! will explore pathways to promote and profile its growing expertise and competencies

Astonished continues to strive to identify and explore additional ways to profile our growing expertise. Student Researchers deliver presentations, we engage in research, and this fall we will be presenting at a conference.

3. Astonished! will identify and begin projects in areas of research for 2013-2015

*We have been engaged in two research projects for the 2015-2016 fiscal year.*

### **Budget, Finance, Fund-Raising**

1. A Finance Committee will be established by June 2013 to further hone the Astonished! budget and to develop budget tracking and reporting processes

A finance committee was established in 2013 and now meets monthly.

2. A Fundraising Committee will be established by June 2013. This committee will work to ensure that Astonished! Income sources become more stable, sturdy and predictable

A fundraising committee was established and meets regularly to identify fundraising strategies for each fiscal year.

3. Astonished! will continue to widen and build the Astonished! donor base

## **University of Regina and Community Partnerships**

1. Astonished! will continue to grow the partnership with the University of Regina.
  - i. In consultation with University of Regina Administration and various Faculties, Astonished! will continue to further identify and develop opportunities related to accessible post-secondary education and social inclusion
  - ii. Astonished! will continue to work with the University of Regina Administration, the A!/University of Regina Working Group, Student Accessibility Services, Campus for All, The Presidents Office, and the Faculties of Education, Kinesiology and Health Studies and Social Work. In addition Astonished! will invite participation from other University of Regina Faculties and departments
  - iii. Astonished! renewed the Memorandum of Understanding between the University of Regina and The Big Sky Centre for Learning and Being Astonished! Inc
  - iv. Astonished! will work with the University of Regina at various levels to develop a three year plan for dedicated office and classroom/meeting space for Astonished! staff and programs at the U of R

*Since 2013 Astonished has worked to grow and solidify the partnership between the University of Regina and Astonished!. We entered into a 5 year MOU taking us into 2019.*

2. Astonished! will continue to widen and grow the Astonished! Community
  - i. Astonished! will increase its public profile locally, and beyond
  - ii. Astonished! will explore mutually beneficial relationships with other local and provincial community based organizations

Over the past three years we have worked to increase our community profile. We continue to introduce ourselves to and work with other community based organizations. In the 2014-2015 year we secured a contract with Community Living Service Delivery as well as the 2015-2016 fiscal year.

## **Administration and Planning**

1. Astonished! will stay true to Astonished! Vision and Values

*In everything we do we keep the Astonished! Vision and Values in the forefront.*

2. Astonished! will stabilize current program initiatives before adding new ones

Over the past three years we have worked to ensure the AITLC and Social Club were stable and flourishing. Over the past three years we introduced the Summer Literacy program and dabbled in PATH to Future Endeavors.



**ASTONISHED!**  
BETTER TOGETHER



## Contact Information

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