

# Annual Report

2019-2020





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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.

We have been living in uncertain times. One year ago, no one could have predicted that a pandemic would shift so many things we 'do'. Just like so many other community-based organizations, we had to be responsive to the unpredictable and ever-changing threat to our sense of safety and community. We are proud to say that this did not change who we *are*. We chose to focus on our strengths (we could not call ourselves Astonished! if we didn't!). While the delivery of supports and services has gone virtual, and we maintained connections to the Student Researchers, Core Members, families, and supporters, A! staff and volunteers demonstrated readiness, creativity, and industriousness. We are so appreciative of your patience as we continue to navigate this extraordinary time in our history.

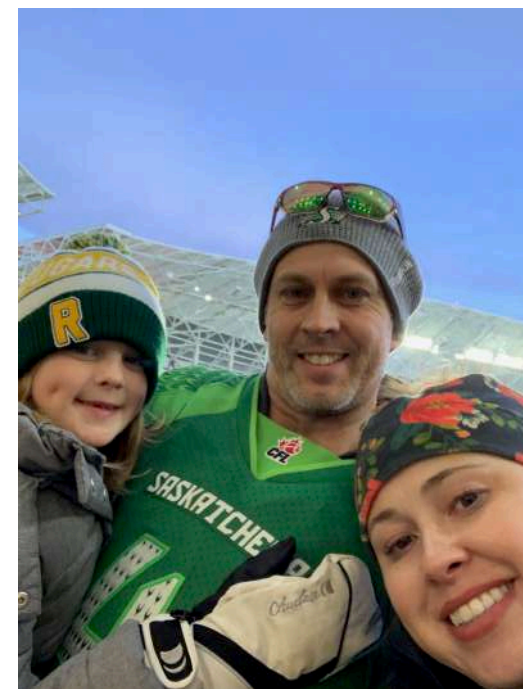
We have a number of newsy items to report since our last AGM! Melissa Turbuck joined A! in August 2019 and has had great success in her role as the Program Coordinator. Elisa Wong has done a great job filling Bonnie's shoes as the Interim Manager, since Bonnie has her hands full with three little girls at home now. The Cummings and Vickaryous families welcomed Oaklynn Elizabeth in December, 2019! (I also invite you to congratulate Bonnie on successfully completing the requirements for her Master's degree ONE WEEK before Oaklynn was born!). And, we had the opportunity to work with and learn from two new members on the Board of Connectors, Audrey Moleski and Nora Davis. Finally, we signed a new Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Regina which extends our relationship with the campus community into 2025.

On behalf of the Board of Connectors, Student Researchers, Core Members, and Astonished! staff and volunteers, I would like to extend a sincere 'thank you' to Karen Clark who is finishing her term on the Board. Karen was with us for 6 years. Karen, thank you for your interest, time, and insight. I would also like to thank Dr. Vianne Timmons for her willingness to engage in discussions with A! parents years ago, welcoming us on campus as we pioneered a new initiative to support young adults living with complex physical disAbilities to live a life according to their strengths, dreams, and needs. We wish Dr. Timmons all the best in her new role as the first female and 13th President and Vice-Chancellor of Newfoundland and Labrador's Memorial University in St. John's.

We are grateful for the opportunity to be stewards of goodness and equality on Treaty 4 Territory, the traditional territory of the Cree, Saulteaux, Dakota, Lakota, Nakoda, and homeland of the Métis.

Warmly,

*Blossom Kimball*



*Brenda, Wilder & Ian*



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## Message from the Interim Manager

Hello friends of the Astonished! Community,

I never thought I would be in this role as the Interim Manager while Bonnie is on maternity leave. I still remember my first day of my fieldwork placement at Astonished! as I was really excited and ending my last day of my placement wanting to work for such an outstanding organization. The support I've received from the Astonished! Community has been incredible and I am thankful for such a wonderful opportunity to be working with everyone again.

Through my involvement with Astonished!, I've seen so much growth over the past year. Although we ended the fiscal year with the unforeseen circumstance of the pandemic, I am proud of everyone continuing to support our vision and values by working together to provide services virtually - we truly are 'better together'.

In 2019-2020, we had many noteworthy accomplishments at Astonished!, which includes:

- Continuing to offer 3 person-centred programs in the areas of self-discovery, recreation/leisure, and teaching/learning which respond directly to Core Members' strengths, dreams, and needs
- Engaging in research, teaching, and learning opportunities
  - Developing and delivering presentations to multiple University of Regina classes (Fall 2018 & Winter 2019)
  - Working with Dr. Johner on a research project entitled Building Bridges with Digital Story Telling (ongoing)
  - Working with Dr. Rossow-Kimball on a research project entitled Creating Spaces for Young Adults with Complex Physical DisAbilities to Communicate Strengths (ongoing)
  - Community partner for the VOICE Lab
  - Performed a JAM session and showcased VOICE Lab projects on campus at the Symposium: Disability Activism Across the Flyover Provinces (Fall 2019)
- Managing the 7th Annual Grow Gratitude campaign, the 5th Annual Walk and Roll, and multiple fundraising activities

I would like to thank everyone for their continued involvement with Astonished!, which enables us to do what we do. By focusing on the strengths perspective, we are building towards an inclusive community. We encourage you to share the story of Astonished! with your friends, family, and work place.

Best,



Elisa Wong



Elisa & Avery

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### Many Thanks

#### Astonished! Communications

**Brenda MacLauchlan**

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#### Board of Connectors

**Dr. Brenda Rossow-Kimball - Chair**

**Dr. Randy Johner - Vice Chair**

**Audrey Moleski - Treasurer**

**Rhea Boysen - Secretary**

**Karen Clark - Member**

**Taylor Carson - Member**

**Nora Davis - Member**

**Heather Dorgan - Member**

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#### Finance Committee

**Sandra Brandt**

**Bonnie Cummings-Vickaryous**

**Audrey Moleski**

**Elisa Wong**

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#### Global Fundraising Committee

**Ruth Blaser**

**Bonnie Cummings-Vickaryous**

**Heather Dorgan**

**Dr. Brenda Rossow-Kimball**

**Elisa Wong**

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#### Program Advisory Committee

**Kelsey Culbert**

**Bonnie Cummings-Vickaryous**

**Judy Humphries**

**Dr. Randy Johner**

**Brenda MacLauchlan**

**Melissa Turbuck**

**Elisa Wong**

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#### Spring Gala Committee

**Rhea Boysen**

**Bonnie Cummings-Vickaryous**

**Deb Ottenbreit**

**Dr. Brenda Rossow-Kimball**

**Katherine Taylor**

**Melissa Turbuck**

**Elisa Wong**

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*Placement Students & Volunteers*

*Thank you to our 2019-2020  
program volunteers and placement  
students!*

### **The Big Sky Centre for Learning & 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 an 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 an 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.





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### 2019-2020 Program Highlights

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

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.



*2019-2020 A!TLC Student Researchers*

#### 2019-2020 A!TLC Highlights

- Dedicated time for each Student Researcher to work on individualized goals and areas of interest
- Off Campus Activities: Joy Lab, Royal Sask. Museum, and The Art of Coffee Seminar at Harbour Landing Village (Fall 2019)
- VOICE Lab projects
- Weekly yoga sessions co-facilitated by Student Researcher Rebekah Lindenbach and Ruth Blaser from 'Yoga for Every Body'
- Guest Speakers: South African culture, Corne Myburgh (Fall 2019); 620 CKRM Cheer Team Member, Alexa Kupchyk (Fall 2019); & Regina Fire Marshall, Randy Ryba (Winter 2020)
- App Seminars: Pic Collage (Fall 2019), This is Sand (Winter 2020)
- Tour of the Faculty of MAP on campus (Winter 2020)
- Virtual Tours: Disney World, Machu Picchu, San Diego Zoo, & Paris (Winter 2020)
- Developed and delivered presentation to Faculty of Education Professional Development Event (Fall 2019)
- Performed a JAM session and showcased VOICE Lab projects on campus at the Symposium: Disability Activism Across the Flyover Provinces (Fall 2019)



*Coffee Time During A!TLC*



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### A!TLC Student Researcher Submissions

#### Kelsey Culbert

Those who know me often call me Hollywood because I'm here, there and everywhere. Over the past year at Astonished!, I have been able to explore my interests and goals with definite clarity. Some of the goals I am currently working on include expanding my network with public speaking and exploring new opportunities in the VOICE Lab through my podcast called "Less Inspiration, More Conversation". I have also been increasing my knowledge in budgeting and money management through practical activities such as going to the mall, restaurants and downloading apps. I have also been writing and publishing posts on my blog "Looking Beyond Labels". I have also been enjoying expanding my involvement with "Listen to Dis Voice"; we finished developing our show "Neither Heroes Nor Ordinary People" and have begun to develop a new show called "Mine to Have" as well as actively bringing awareness and fundraising. Every day I continue to advocate and educate those on disability, particularly self-advocacy. I have been volunteering at Harbour Landing Village planning events and activities for the residents. I have thoroughly enjoyed being given the opportunity to expand my interests and goals.



#### Sean Davis

Hi, I am Sean Davis and I have been a Student Researcher at Astonished! for 5 years now! This year I have had a few personal goals that I have been working on improving, which include navigation skills, working on communication, planning the agenda for my SNAG meetings, learning new games and working in the Voice Lab on Ableton. I improved on my navigation skills by taking the city bus and looking up bus routes. I have worked on my communication skills; the main part of my communication skills I wanted to improve was holding a conversation through texting. For my SNAG meetings, I have been starting to plan my own agendas so that I can lead the meetings. Some of the new games and apps I have been learning about are UNO, YouTube, Instagram and Houseparty. Lastly, I made a sound scape in the Voice Lab using Ableton.

Some of my interest are attending sporting events, watching sporting events on TV and attending concerts. I was able to attend four Pats games this year! I was also able to attend a few concerts this year as well. A few of my favourites were Alan Doyle, Ines Sisters and The Wailers. Some of my favourite sports teams are the Riders, Blue Jays, and Toronto Maple Leafs. I also am interested in public speaking I have been able to speak in some classes at the U of R. I was also able to join the Astonished! Leadership Team this year and helped plan and attend Social Club events.



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### Kennen Dorgan

Hi, my name is Kennen Dorgan. I am a warmhearted, friendly, and outgoing young woman. I am one of the Student Researchers at Astonished! This year, my goals included: improving my photography skills, improving my literacy skills, and connecting with friends. One of my biggest goals continues to be improving my literacy skills and I have been making lots of progress with this! I have been going to lessons through Astonished! to improve my literacy skills and building on this during PATH Days.

I love the opportunities that Astonished! gives me to improve on my goals and build stronger friendships with my friends.



### Kaitlyn Hoar

Hi! My name is Kaitlyn Hoar and I am a Student Researcher at Astonished! and I was also on the Leadership Team. I enjoy and look forward to planning and attending social events. In the past year with the support of Astonished!, my family, friends and I have focused on social opportunities and planned many events. I also worked with a committee to plan the 2019 Pizza and Pasta fundraiser. I also made some new good friends and look forward to more planning and social events or just hanging out with friends.



*The Art of Coffee*



*Royal Saskatchewan Museum*



*MacKenzie Art Gallery*

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### Rebekah Lindenbach

'For each part is a part of each other part, we all are a part of one another.' (Carolyn McDade). This has been a year to shine a light on the part we play in the lives of each other, and Rebekah Lindenbach has shone her bright light of adaptability, love, loyalty, and resilience. In early September 2019 Rebekah and her aunts sold their city house and moved into residence at Kīšik Towers at the University of Regina. This was not their plan, but their new condo was not ready. Residence life provided easy access to campus, visits from friends and A! staff, too many noisy parties outside our ground floor windows, and problem solving and solutions, like using a canning jar lid and a rock as a stopper for the tub drain. Rebekah's sense of humour prevailed through it all.

In October Rebekah moved into her city condo and once again her adaptability was evident. There was lots of chaos and confusion, but Rebekah loved it all. Rebekah is naturally social so being able to visit with neighbours in the common house, invite her friends over to visit and see her new digs, and host a family Christmas party for 32 of her family members was right up her alley. Thank goodness there was lots of stability and not much chaos at her farm home during this time.

As we all know the world as we knew it really changed in 2020. The COVID 19 isolation period began on the same day Rebekah's aunty Brenda developed pneumonia. This meant Rebekah spent the isolation period at her farm home. She took to the Astonished! Teaching and Learning Centre sessions on Zoom like a duck to water. Rebekah and her auntie Ruth also adapted their Yoga For Every Body weekly classes to teaching online via Zoom. Her Wednesday PATH days with Mia Bell were always fun. Through it all Rebekah and her mom and dad, and extended farm family and her companion Donna kept life on an even keel. In July Rebekah will celebrate her 30<sup>th</sup> birthday. She is a mature, generous, funny young woman who is very adaptable.



### 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 blogging, baking, leisure time and community outings. I enjoy attending Yoga for Every Body once a week and I also like it when guests come in to speak or do activities with us in A!TLC. My favourite activities with A!TLC over the past year has been playing board/card games, going on outings and watching movies.





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### Landon Sawden

Hi, my name is Landon and I am a student at the University of Regina majoring in Psychology, as well as, I am a Student Researcher with Astonished! Some of my interests are: hanging out with friends, going for walks, I love my 2 Pitbulls and hanging out with them, doing a bit of mechanic work that I am able to, watching Youtube videos and making videos (hopefully one day I can become YouTube famous and become rich). I also like to drive my wheelchair really fast throughout the hallways of the University of Regina! If you were to ask my friends or people who know me, they would say that I am really sassy and obnoxious with a spunky attitude and that all comes with a big ego!

I am a Leadership Team Member for the Astonished! 2019/2020 Leadership Team, as well as, I take part in Social Club events such as bowling, cougar hockey games, poker night, etc. In A!TLC my favourite day is Bar Day! In A!TLC we did a tour of the theatre and we went on an elevator that went down to the stage and that was really fun!

During Wednesdays also known as My Bigger Ego Day, I have been working on trying to improve my literacy skills. I also use this time to study for my exams for my school and I've learned some new studying skills. In the Voice Lab I have been learning different film technology, editing software, as well as, different ways to get my YouTube channel to get more noticed through social media and a following. I went over different directions for my Youtube channel such as what kind of videos I would be posting. My future direction would be to make a podcast with my best friend, Sean Davis, to go with my YouTube channel. I also did some work with Dr. Helen Pridmore and her husband in the Voice Lab with Sean working on Ableton and we made a Soundscape that was presented at the Symposium in November 2019. I went on a couple friend dates, one in particular was with Kennen and we had pizza at the Owl and that was really fun!! Hope you enjoyed reading about me, Have a great day!!!



Kennen, Bonnie, Kaitlyn & Melissa



Serena, Avery & Elisa



Melissa & Sean

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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 2019 had 15 Core Members, with 1 Core Member receiving one-on-one literacy lessons and 14 Core Members receiving group lessons. Through fun, creative, and age appropriate activities, program content focused on reading comprehension, retention, creative writing, financial literacy, health literacy, technology, social media and cultural literacy.**

**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 2020, virtually.**



*2019 Summer Literacy*



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### 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. Thank you to the Community Initiatives Fund for their grant, which partially supported the Social Club program.



Our collaboration with the City of Regina began in May 2019. Astonished! received funding from the City of Regina **Social Development Grant - Annual Activity**. In the letter accompanying the grant, the city wrote “Your program provides supportive, meaningful, and accessible social, recreational, and cultural activities to young adults with complex physical disabilities. The committee acknowledged that your program responds to a great need in community and, aligns strongly to the City’s social development priorities.”

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 2019-2020 reporting period. Similar to last year, we have continued to collaborate 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.



#### 2019-2020 Events

- Paint Nite
- Variety Night
- Regina Farmers’ Market
- Royal SK Museum
- Annual Summer BBQ
- Rider Game & Pizza Night
- Halloween Game Night
- Cougar Hockey Game
- Holiday Feast
- Sask Rush Game
- Bowling
- Movie Night



### 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, 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

**Better  
Together**

### 2019-2020 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, KIN 341, KHS 300, ECS 200, EPSY 400 & SW
- Collaborating with 11 groups of KIN 342 students on the 2019 Walk and Roll
- Collaborating with the VOICE Lab team and engaging in projects and research associated with the lab
- 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
- Bonnie Cummings-Vickaryous completing her thesis which focused on Astonished!



*Dr. Timmons & Rebekah (Rebekah's PATH Party)*

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### 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 2019-2020 budget and build towards establishing a healthy operating reserve.

### 2019-2020 Fundraising Strategies

- 2019 Grow Gratitude Campaign (\$19,254)
- 2020 Spring Gala (\$31,901)
- Pizza & Pasta Fundraiser (\$2,270)
- Summer Raffle (\$2,265)
- Walk and Roll (\$30,319)
- Grants & Foundation Support
  - Lorne and Evelyn Johnson Foundation at the South Saskatchewan Community Foundation
  - Canada Summer Jobs Grant
  - The City of Regina Social Development Grant
  - Conexus Credit Union Community Investment Program



City of Regina



5th Annual Walk and Roll

### 2019-2020 Donor Numbers

- ~ 462 Donors
- 9 Monthly Donors







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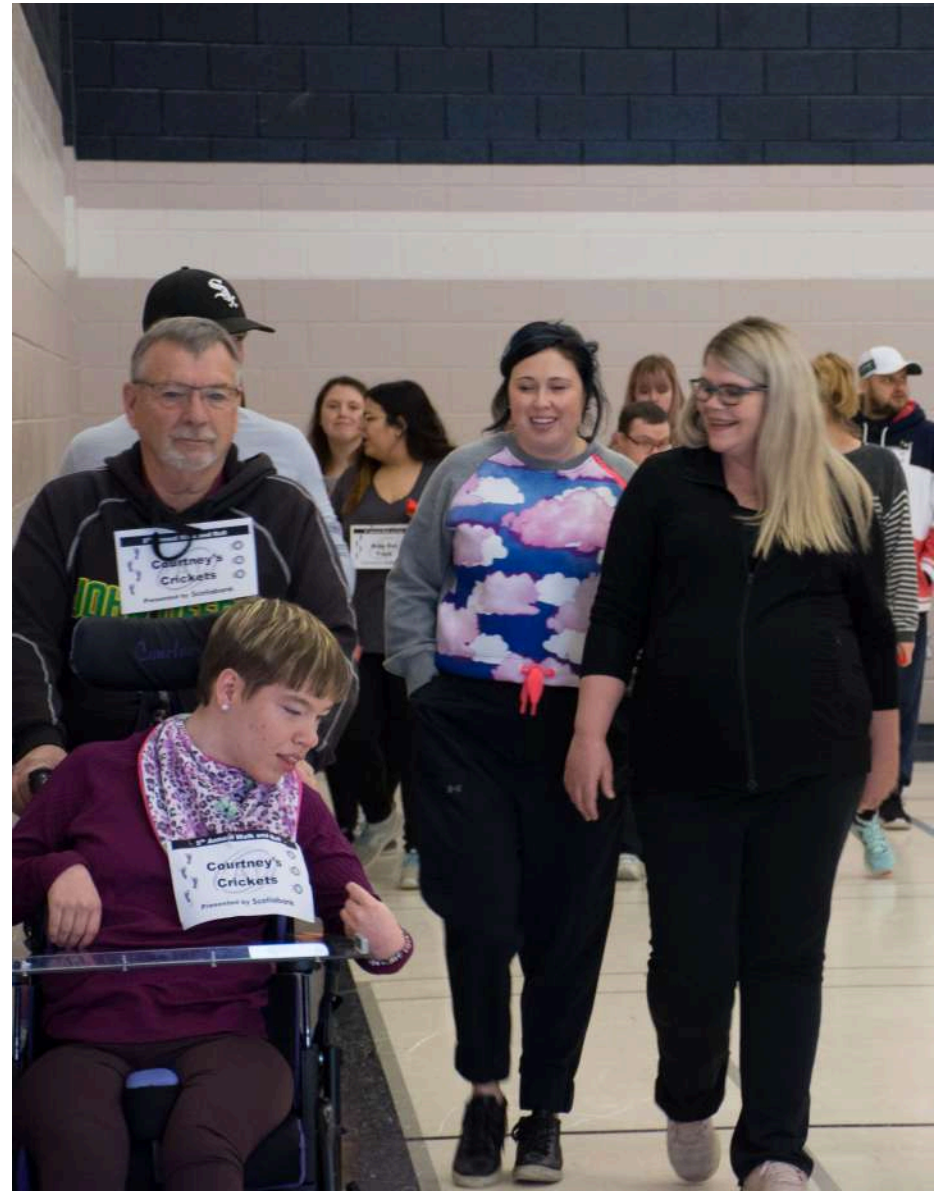
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