

# Annual Report

2020-2021







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# ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021

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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.

A year ago, in my AGM welcome, I reflected on the few months since the pandemic began:

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'...

And now I reflect on how far we have come in the last 12 months. We have all been affected by the pandemic, but I hope we can all feel that new opportunities are on the horizon and we can soon be together with those who are important to us.

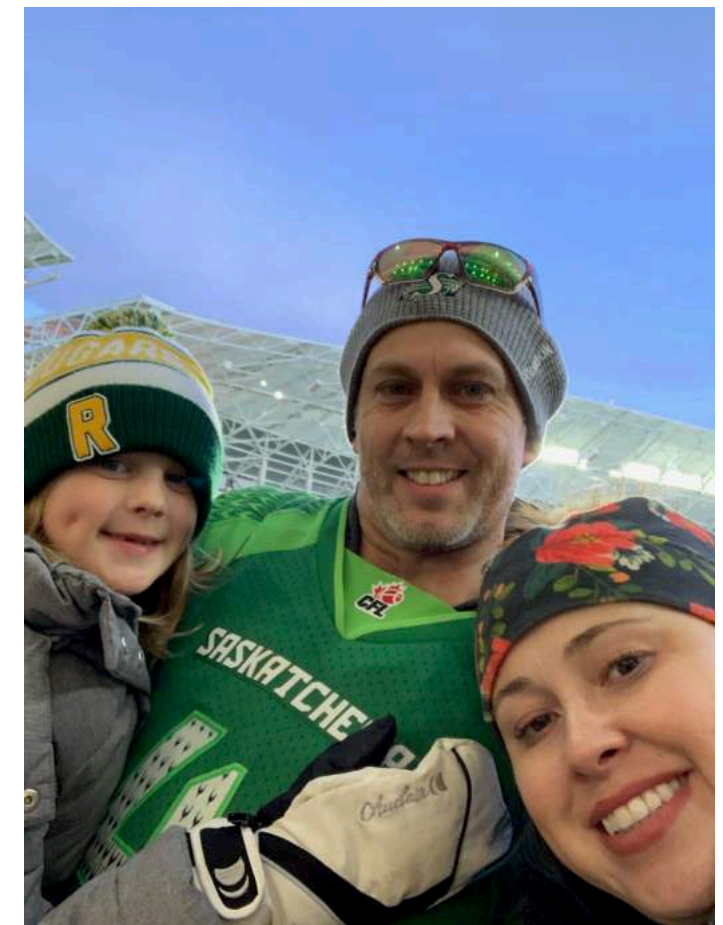
Over the past year, we were pleased to welcome Bonnie back from her maternity leave; we welcomed a new baby into the Astonished! family (congratulations Mel and Corne on baby Nile); and Emma Hancock joined us as the Interim Program Coordinator. While the restrictions of the pandemic did impose some necessary changes on program delivery, Astonished proved to be innovative in maintaining connections with student researchers, core members, families, and supporters. Our 'virtual' fundraising initiatives (particularly the Walk & Roll and spring gala) were well received and proved to be successful.

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 Randy Johner and Audrey Moleski who are both finishing their terms on the Board. We sincerely appreciate your commitment, expertise, and insight. We are welcoming four new members to the Board: Michael Dubnewick (Assistant Professor, Faculty of Kinesiology & Health Studies; University of Regina), Denecca Ludwar (Chartered Professional Accountant, Thorp & Company) Helen Pridmore (Associate Professor, Faculty of Media, Art, Performance; University of Regina), Nikita Rathwell (lawyer with McKercher Law in Saskatoon)

We are grateful for continued opportunities 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*

# ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021

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## Message from the Executive Director

Dear members and friends of the Astonished! Community,

Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine I would be returning to work in the middle of a pandemic! While I was on maternity leave I had the opportunity to support Astonished! when and where needed. This provided me with the opportunity to stay involved and current in the Astonished! 'happenings'. More importantly, I had the opportunity to observe this community in action. I can firmly state that what I observed is a strong community that leans on each other for support and guidance. Together, the Astonished! Core Members and their families, the Astonished! Board of Directors, and the Astonished! Staff worked together to navigate the pandemic and to determine solutions that work for our community! Shifting to virtual program delivery in March of 2019 was not easy but together we are doing it. As we look forward to the fall we will continue to lean on each other to determine what is best and safest for all members of our community.

I continue to be thankful for the community that supports the work of Astonished! Even in the middle of a pandemic with so much uncertainty people and businesses continue to support the vision and values of Astonished. For this, I am grateful - we truly are 'better together'.

In 2020-2021, we had many noteworthy accomplishments including:

- Continuing to offer 3 person-centred programs in the areas of self-discovery, recreation/leisure, and teaching/learning
- Continuing to respond directly to Core Members' strengths, dreams, and needs
- Engaging in research, teaching, and learning opportunities
  - 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 (wrapped Summer 2020)
  - Worked with Dr. Pridmore and John Campbell on a video for the Open Ears Festival
- Managing the 8th Annual Grow Gratitude campaign, the 6th Annual Walk and Roll, and our first ever virtual benefit concert!
- Facilitating a 3-part series on Mental Health and a 4-part series on healthy relationships and sexuality

I would like to thank everyone for their continued involvement in Astonished!. Your interest, presence and the gifts that you share enable us to continue to build an inclusive community.. We encourage you to share the story of Astonished! with your friends, family, and work place.

Best,



Bonnie Cummings-Vickaryous



*Vickaryous Family*



## 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**

**Taylor Carson - Member**

**Nora Davis - Member**

**Heather Dorgan - Member**

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### Finance Committee

**Sandra Brandt**

**Bonnie Cummings-Vickaryous / Elisa Wong**

**Audrey Moleski**

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### Global Fundraising Committee

**Ruth Blaser**

**Bonnie Cummings-Vickaryous / Elisa Wong**

**Heather Dorgan**

**Dr. Brenda Rossow-Kimball**

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### Program Advisory Committee

**Kelsey Culbert**

**Bonnie Cummings-Vickaryous**

**Nora Davis**

**Heather Dorgan**

**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 2020-2021  
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.



## 2020-2021 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.



*Virtual Program. A screen shot from the video made with Dr. Pridmore*

### 2020-2021 A!TLC Highlights

- Dedicated time for each Student Researcher to work on individualized goals and areas of interest
- Virtual Tours: Disney World, Machu Picchu, San Diego Zoo, Paris, San Diego Zoo, African Safari, Mosaic: Festival of Cultures (Spring 2020); Guggenheim Museum of Art, Smithsonian, Harbour Landing Village Artwork (Fall 2020); Hawaii (Winter 2021)
- Weekly yoga sessions co-facilitated by Rebekah Lindenbach and Ruth Blaser from 'Yoga for Every Body'
- App Seminars: Cove App, Snapseed, BuzzFeed (Fall 2020); Happify (Winter 2021)
- Activities: no-bake recipes (energy balls, oreo cookie balls); birdhouses, flower pots, succulent terrarium kits, gardening series (including our own accessible garden beds in the community gardens); Hawaiian Vacation, drink mixology, DIY home décor crafts, Escape Room, In-Person Park Day (September 2020); photography series
- VOICE Lab: live concerts with Dr. Helen Pridmore, Deep listening exercises, Photography workshop with Mia Bell; Virtual tour of Slate Art Gallery; Improv workshops with Chancz Sutherland; Soundscape
- Book Club: Anne of Green Gables by Lucy Maud Montgomery (read by P.E.I. band 'The East Pointers'); Not Fade Away: A Memoir of Senses Lost and Found by Rebecca Alexander; If at Birth You Don't Succeed by Zach Anner
- In partnership with Dr. Helen Pridmore and John Campbell, made a soundscape of Henderson's Café to recreate our in-person coffee times, in 360o video format. The video was shown at the Open Ears Festival in Kitchener, Ontario in June 2021.



### 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 through LinkedIn and still creating episodes for my podcast called "Less Inspiration, More Conversation", which I have expanded to various podcast platforms such as Spotify, CBC, apple music and many more. 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 both of our shows "Neither Heroes Nor Ordinary People" and "Mine to Have", which have been a lot of fun. Due to COVID we have had to adapt to a digital platform which has also been fun but challenging. I really hope to get back in person, especially for theater, soon! Every day I continue to advocate and educate those on disability, particularly self-advocacy. 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 6 years now! This year I have had a few personal goals that I have been working on improving, which include navigation skills and learning new games such as money management. I improved on my navigation skills by using Google Maps. I have worked on my communication skills; the main part of my communication skills I wanted to improve was holding a conversation through texting and emailing too.

Some of my interests are attending sporting events, watching sporting events on TV, attending concerts, and reading! I was able to attend some virtual Pats games this year! Some of my favourite sports teams are the Riders, Blue Jays, and Toronto Maple Leaf's. I also am interested in public speaking. I was also able to attend virtual social club events with Astonished!. I really enjoyed learning virtually this year.





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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 I learned the entire alphabet and I am currently working on typing and reading. I am improving my literacy skills, connecting with friends, and learning new things about gardening. One of my biggest goals continues to be improving my literacy skills and I have been making a lot of progress with this! I have been going to lessons through Astonished! as well as practicing at home to improve my literacy skills during PATH Days.

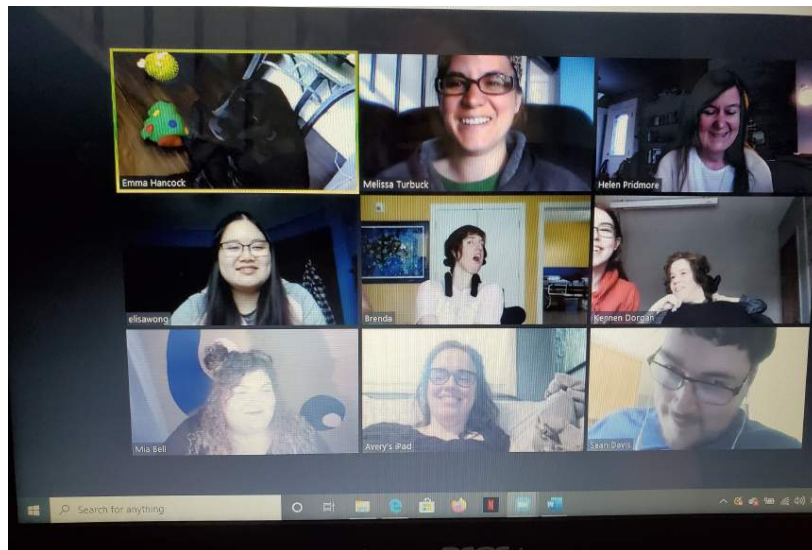
I love the opportunities that Astonished! gives me to improve on my goals, as well as my creativity and helping to build stronger friendships. One of the ways I have been letting my creativity shine is through doing crafts with my friends at Astonished!



### Kaitlyn Hoar

Hi my name is Kaitlyn Hoar. I have been with astonished from the very beginning, first on the leadership team then as a student researcher when ATLC was established a few years later. I am a very social person and really enjoy being around people at social or sporting events or attending ATLC or just hanging out with friends and family.

This past year has been a very difficult but the pandemic has made me realize not to take anything for granted. I do not like sitting on Zoom as it gives me a headache being on screen too long but when I did it was great to see all my people. I really enjoyed planning Melissa's baby shower on Zoom and can't wait to meet her baby in person. Very thankful for Emma and the students who made this past year better. Hope to see everyone soon



'Zooming'



Outdoor A!TLC



Program Packages



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### Rebekah Lindenbach

**My name is Rebekah Lindenbach. Weekly A!TLC programming on Zoom, and Social Club Events, are essential to me, and have helped me stay positive and engaged during the pandemic.**

**This year I have focused on my health and well-being, and I have enjoyed learning about and supporting the health and well-being of others. One way I do this is team teaching, Yoga for Every Body, on Fridays. I also interviewed people of various ages to learn what is contributing to their health and well-being during the pandemic.**

**Many people said that staying active and being outside helps them. I am happy to say that I enjoyed a great winter of skiing. My first ever. We found skis that attach easily to the front wheels of my chair. Skiing feels like flying.**



### Avery Ottenbreit

**Hello, 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. Over the past year, I have focused a lot on my art. I have done a few pieces on canvas and I am really happy with the results. Some people have even offered to buy them from me. I've also been writing my own cookbook. It is made up of a number of my favourite recipes. Because of COVID, I haven't been able to do much out in the community. Actually, I was rather happy about staying at home. I have enjoyed safe outdoor visits when the weather is nice and going for walks around my neighbourhood. During the colder months, I have done a lot of virtual tours. My favourites were art museums, zoo's and aquariums. During A!TLC, I've enjoyed the painting activities and movie days.**



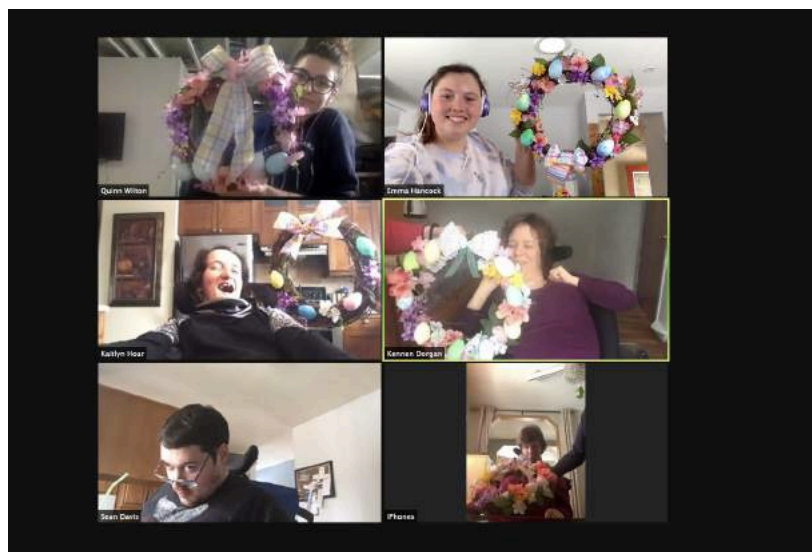
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### Landon Sawden

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. One of the things I have missed during COVID-19 is driving my wheelchair quickly throughout the hallways of the University! If you were to ask my friends about me, they would say that I am really sassy and obnoxious with a spunky attitude and that all comes with a big ego!

I have still enjoyed participating in virtual Social Club events such as movie nights, the NFL Viewing Party, and the Escape Rooms while hanging out with my friends. As for A!TLC, I have enjoyed my PATH days with Emma.

My Bigger Ego Day in Spring 2020 continued to focus on literacy skills, and I was able to read my whole June 2020 PATH Showcase presentation on my own! I was introduced to multiple online dating platforms. I also got to take Mel on a virtual walk through my neighbourhood – Mel was on a bumpy ride when I dropped my phone while going over a bump! During the Fall 2020 semester, Nick and I had a few virtual movie days with Sean Davis as well. During the Winter 2021 semester, I decided that I wanted to use this time to get away from my stress of being a student. Emma and I used this time to hangout, and have fun! We have improved my communication skills and getting back to people in a timely manner. We also discussed long-term financial goals and steps I need to do to reach those goals. My favourite part was psychologically analyzing Emma! Bye Felicia!



Kennen, Bonnie, Kaitlyn & Melissa



Serena, Avery & Elisa



Melissa & Sean



## 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 Literacy 2020 was offered virtually, with 10 Core Members participating. 1 Core Member received individual literacy lessons, and 9 Core Members attended group lessons. Summer Staff had to be extra creative to deliver fun and age appropriate activities, all while navigating the new, virtual world! Program sessions focused on traditional literacy, cultural literacy, financial literacy, health literacy, and technology.**

**Cultural literacy focused on Indigenous culture including art, language, and dance, as well as Ukrainian history within Saskatchewan. Our technology units focused on new, 'hip' apps like TikTok, Snapseed, and photography. Health literacy explored navigating mental health in times of stress, gratitude, and accessing online mental health support. And finally, financial literacy focused on budgeting, counting money, and an awesome game of The Price is Right.**

**Tuesday evenings were focused on the arts, including art activities (Zine making, mask making), tour of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and a virtual street art tour.**



## 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 typically 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 valuable experience.

In response to the pandemic, this year we offered the Social Club virtually.

We are thankful for our collaboration with the City of Regina. Since May Astonished! receives funding from the City of Regina **Social Development Grant - Annual Activity** to partially fund the Social Club. 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.”**

## Annual Series

Astonished strives to develop and offer a minimum of two three-part series each year. This year we were pleased to offer a 3 part series focusing on mental health and a 4 part series exploring sexuality and relationships. We are thankful for support from the Community Initiatives Fund, the Lorne and Evelyn Johnson Foundation at the South Saskatchewan Community Foundation as well as the City of Regina.

## Astonished! Hangouts

A! Hangouts was introduced as a pilot program by two social work students in the Winter 2021 semester. Once a month, for 3 months, Core Members were invited to hangout on Zoom on a Saturday afternoon. There were no structured events for the afternoon, just an opportunity to get together as a group, chat, and catch up with one-another. Core Members gave requests for snacks and beverages (alcoholic or non-alcoholic) to enjoy while we were hanging out. The program has since been changed to occur bi-monthly.



### 2020-2021 Events

- Movie Night: Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle
- Cirque du Soleil Special
- Virtual Escape Room
- Virtual Camp Night
- Movie Night: Holes
- Legally Blonde: The Musical
- Escape Room
- Christmas Stocking Decorating
- Movie Night: Elf
- NFL Playoff Game Viewing Party
- Valentine's Cookie Decorating
- Trivia Night and St. Patrick's Day Mocktails



### **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**

### **2020-2021 Highlights**

- Welcoming and mentoring 5 practicum/placement students from numerous faculties including the Faculties of Kinesiology and Health Studies and Social Work
- Welcoming and shaping numerous student volunteers
- Collaborating with 3 groups of KIN 342 students on the 2020 Virtual Walk and Roll
- Collaborating with the VOICE Lab team and engaging in projects and research associated with the lab
- Working with Dr. Rossow-Kimball on a research project entitled Creating Spaces for Young Adults with Complex Physical DisAbilities to Communicate Strengths
- Working with Dr. Pridmore and John Campbell on a video for the Open Ears Festival



**Better  
Together**

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 equal to a minimum of our annual operating budget.

Astonished! also receives a portion of our operating budget from Community Living Service Delivery.

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 2020-2021 budget and build towards establishing a healthy operating reserve.

2020-2021 Fundraising Strategies

- 2020 Grow Gratitude Campaign (\$19,925)
- 2020 Spring Gala (\$36,480)
- Summer Raffle (\$2,225)
- Walk and Roll (\$24,272)
- 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
  - Community Initiatives Fund
  - Forbes Foundation at the South Saskatchewan Community Foundation
  - JBL Foundation
  - George Reed Centre for Accessible Visual Communication



20120-2021  
Donor Numbers  
~ 380 Donors



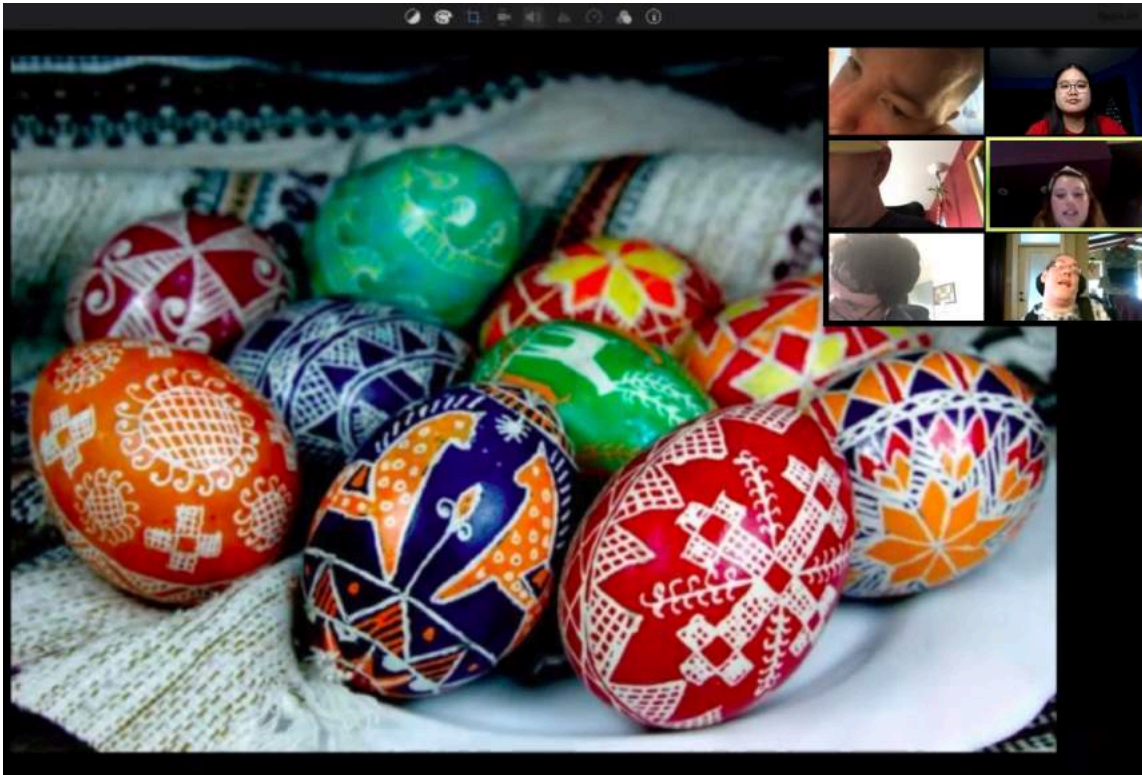
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For how many minutes could each camper shower for?

- a. One minute
- b. 25 minutes
- c. 4 minutes
- d. 13.5 minutes



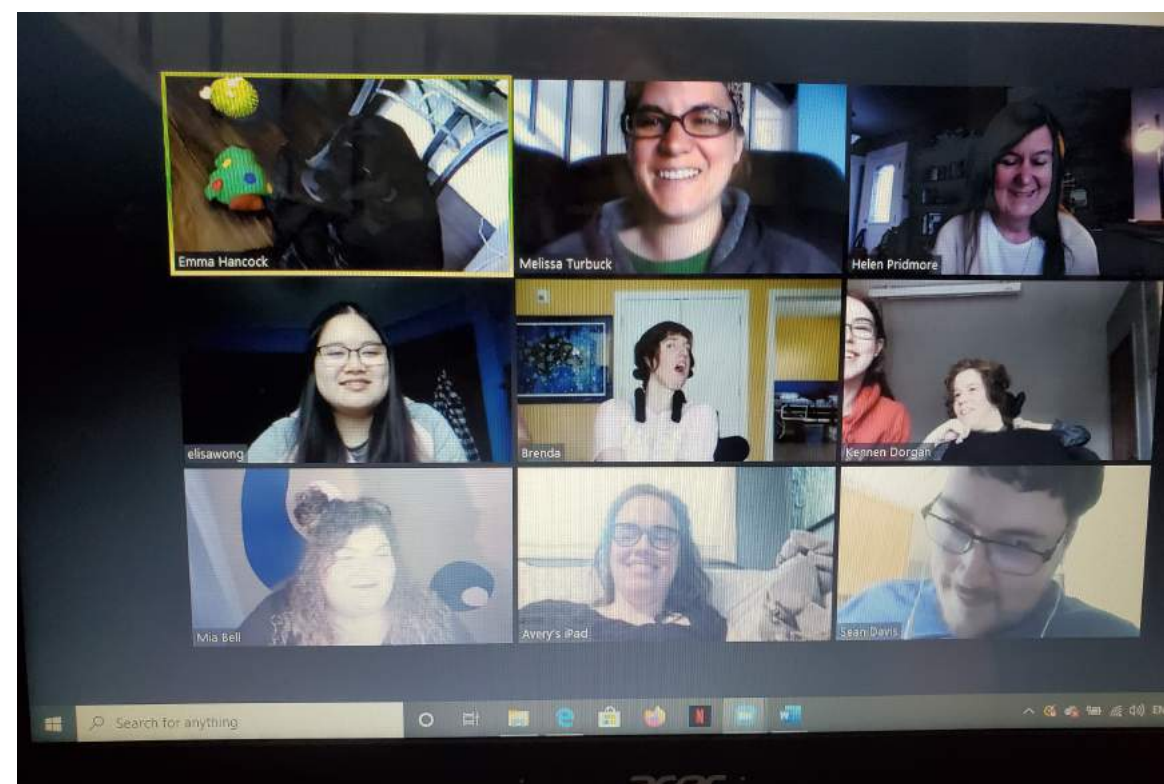
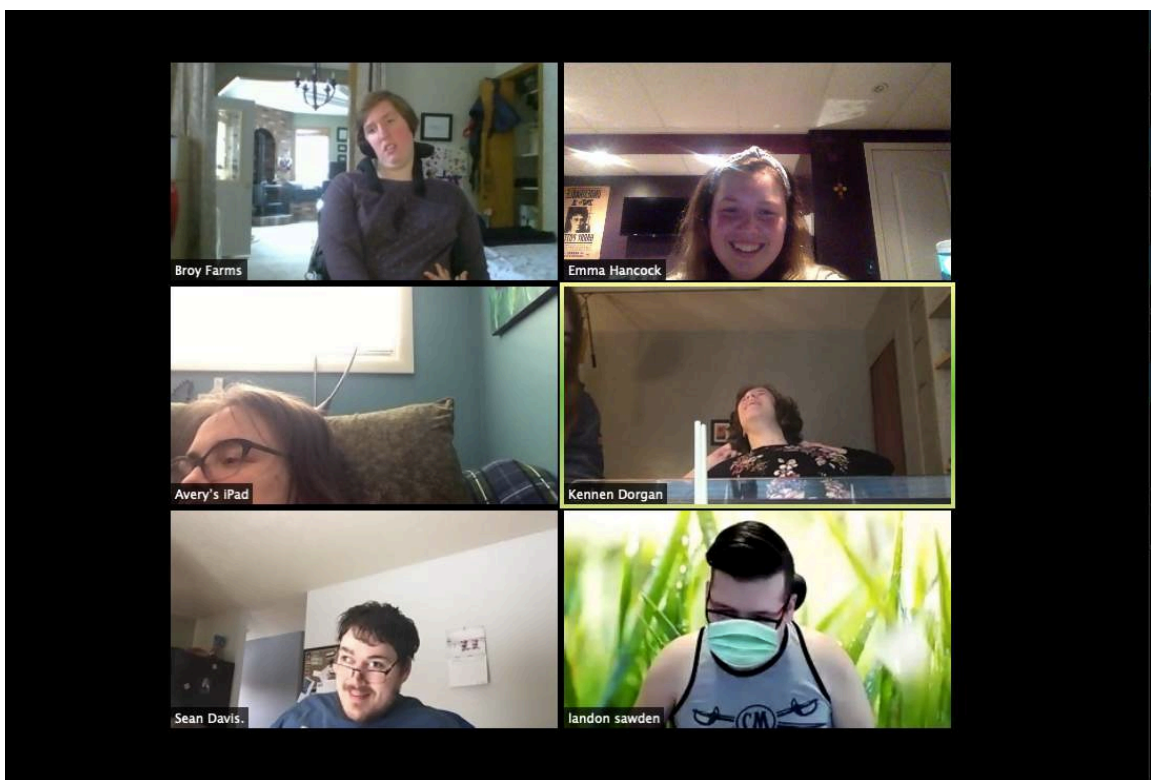


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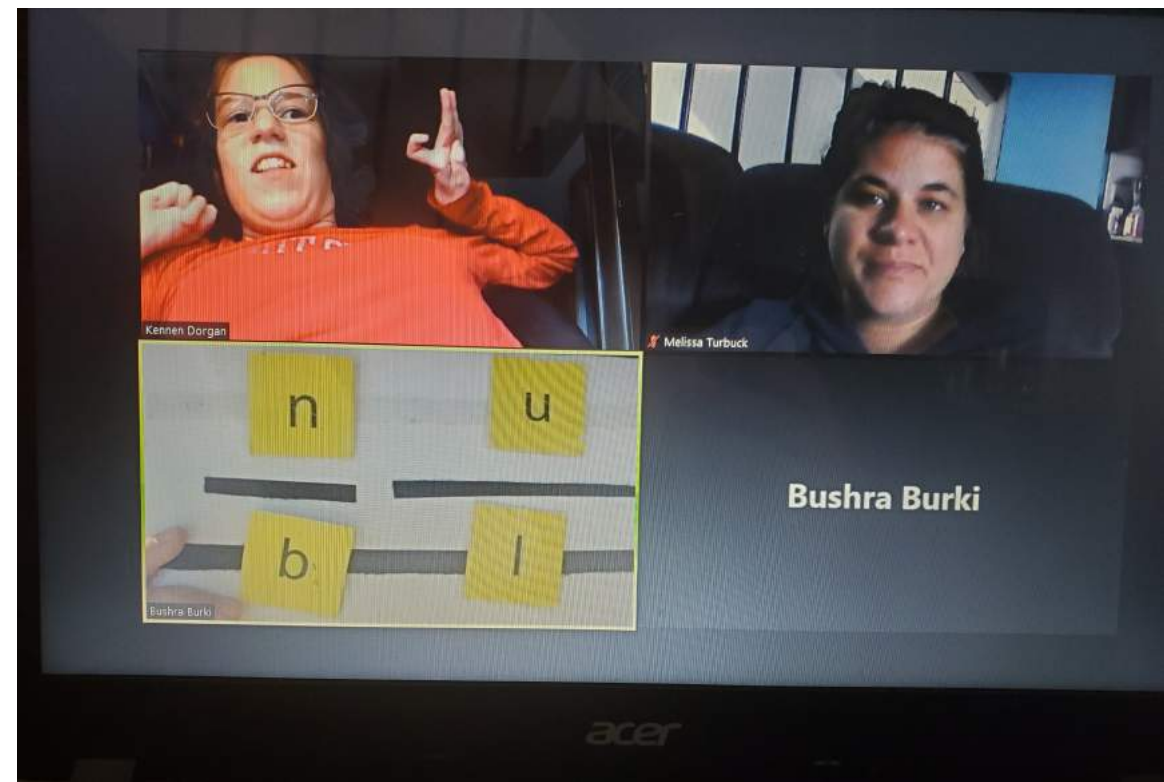


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Astonished!

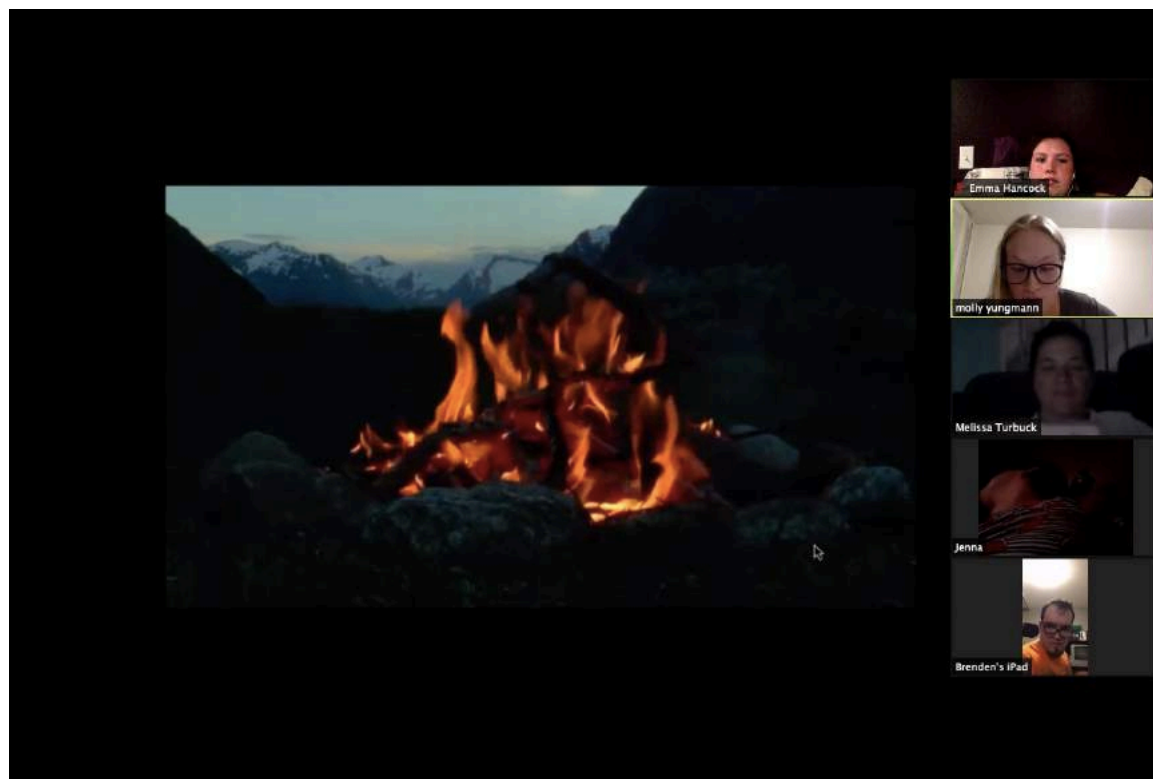
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\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$20
\$300	\$300	\$300	\$300	\$30
\$400	\$400	\$400	\$400	\$40
\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500

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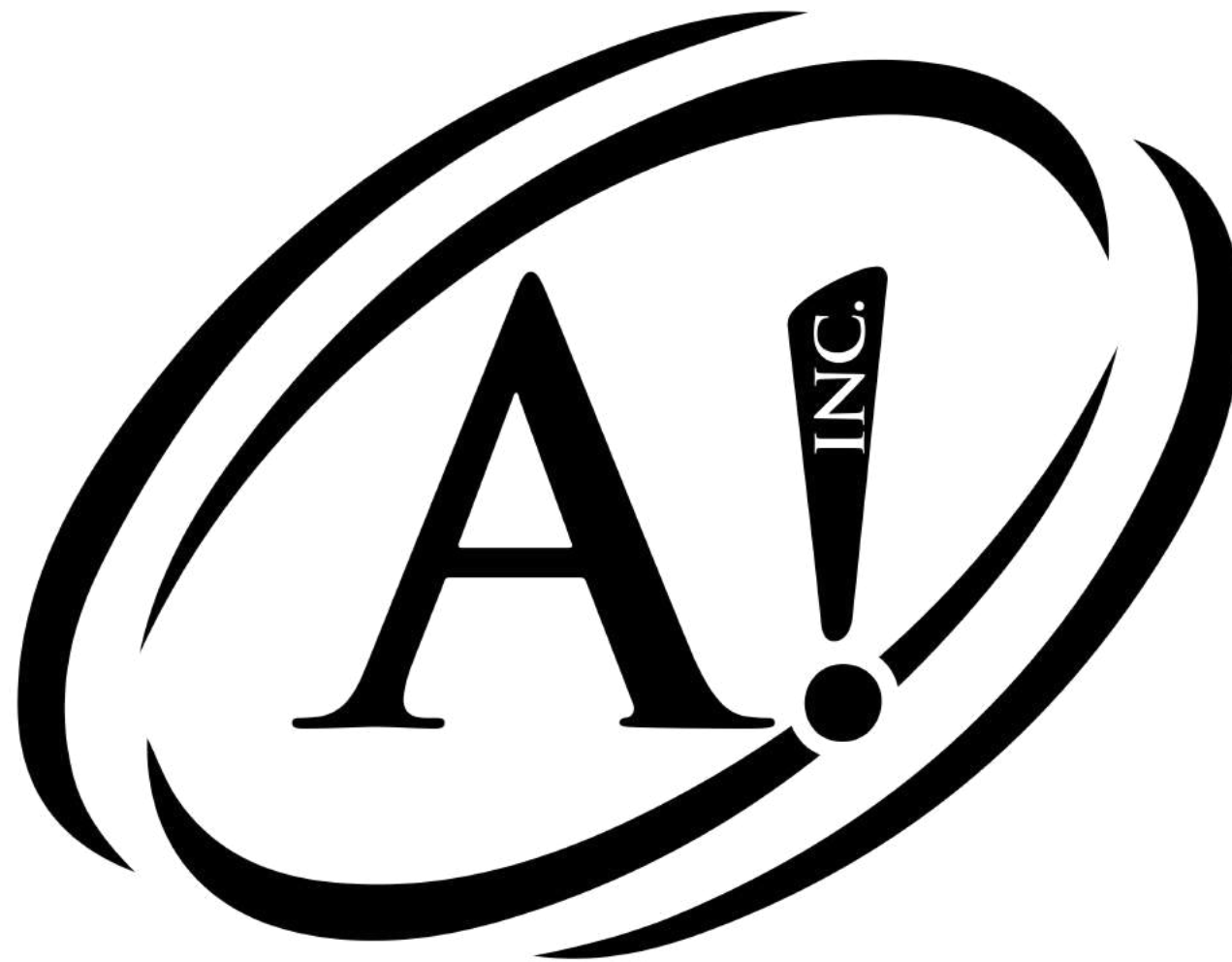
# PRESENTS



## Cookie Decorating

When: February 13th @ 7-9 pm on Zoom  
RSVP to [emma.hancock@beingastonished.com](mailto:emma.hancock@beingastonished.com) or  
306-550-4514  
RSVP by February 5th, 2021





Bonnie C Vickaryous

Executive Director

306.737.9560

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