

2021-2022

Annual Report

A Year in Review



Better Together



ASTONISHED!
BETTER TOGETHER

Table of Contents

Message from the Chair

4

Message from the Executive Director

5

Many Thanks

6

Overview

9

Guiding Principles and Values

10

Program Highlights

11

University of Regina

19

Community Profile and Fundraising

20

2021-2022



BETTER TOGETHER - A YEAR IN REVIEW

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

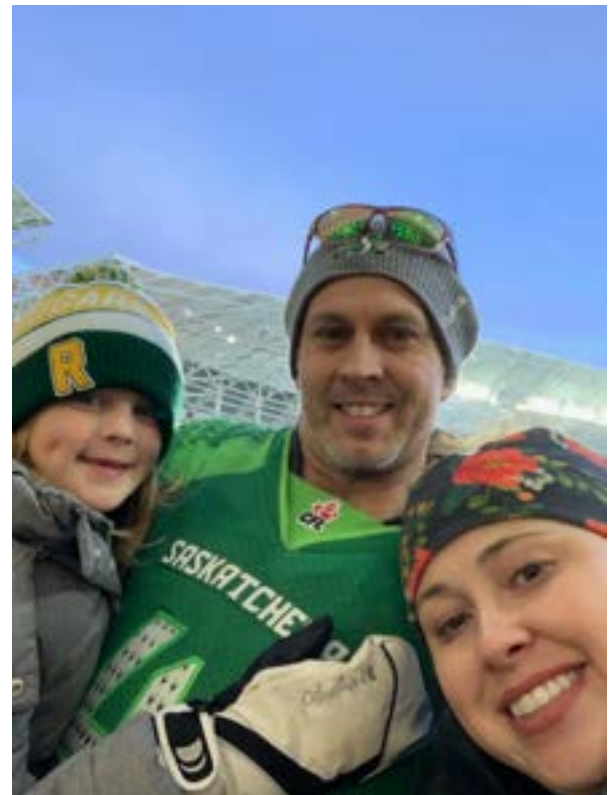
On behalf of the Student Researchers, Core Members, families, staff, supporters, funders, and Board of Connectors, I am pleased to welcome you to our Annual General Meeting.

We have experienced many lovely successes since our last AGM! We spent another year navigating the pandemic while continuing our focus on the strengths, dreams, and needs of young adults living with complex physical disAbilities. Everyone proved to be creative and industrious, throughout. While the delivery of supports and services was mostly presented virtually, we are pleased to announce we returned to on-campus/in-community face-to-face activities in the new year. We also welcomed two new student researchers and five new core members. We were able to virtually host our two annual fundraisers, the Walk & Roll and our spring gala, with great success.

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 Heather Dorgan who served on the board. We appreciated her time and expertise on the board of connectors from 2018.

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.

Sincerely
Brenda Rossow-Kimball





MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear members and friends of the Astonished! Community,

Over the past year I have continued to witness a community in action. I can firmly state that I have observed a strong community that continues to respond to the ebbs and flows of the Covid-19 pandemic all while leaning on each other for support and guidance. Together, the Astonished! Core Members and their families/networks, the Astonished! Board of Directors, and the Astonished! Staff worked to navigate the pandemic and to determine solutions that worked for our community! Through in person service delivery, virtual service delivery, and a blended approach we have been able to respond to the strengths, dreams, and needs of the Astonished! Core Membership.

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

In 2021-2022, we had many noteworthy accomplishments including:

- Continuing to offer 3 person-centered 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 with students and faculty from the University of Regina as well as a new collaboration with Faculty from the University of Calgary;
- Managing the 9th Annual Grow Gratitude campaign, the 7th Annual Walk and Roll, and our annual spring fundraiser;
- Facilitating workshops and educational and interactive series.

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.

Cheers,
Bonnie Cummings-Vickaryous

MANY THANKS

Communications

Brenda MacLauchlan

Dr. Brenda Rossow-Kimball-Chair

Taylor Carson - Vice Char

Rhea Boysen - Secretary

Deneeca Ludwar - Treasurer

Nora Davis

Dr. Michael Dubnewick

Dr. Helen Pridmore

Nikita Rathwell

Board of Connectors

Bonnie Cummings-Vickaryous

Sandra Brandt

Deneeca Ludwar

Finance Committee

MANY THANKS

Global Fundraising Committee

Ruth Blaser
Bonnie Cummings-
Vickaryous
Dr. Brenda Rossow-Kimball

Program Advisory Committee

Kelsey Culbert
Bonnie Cummings-Vickaryous
Nora Davis
Brenda MacLauchlan
Melissa Turbuck

Spring Fundraiser Committee

Bonnie Cummings-Vickaryous
Avery Ottenbreit
Deb Ottenbreit
Katherine Taylor
Melissa Turbuck
Elisa Wong
Dr. Brenda Rossow-Kimball

MANY THANKS

Placement Students

Sarah Black

Micah Butalid

Yetunde Micho

Kimberley Nagy

Vidya Persaud

Paige Quewezance

Shaylee Rosnes

Kamila Sanborn

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! Together we have created 4 core programs:

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





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.



2021-2022 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

CORE PROGRAMS

- ATLC
- SOCIAL CLUB
- SUMMER LITERACY

INNITIATIVES

- SERIES
- HANGOUTS

2021-2022 A!TLC 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. This year we welcomed two additional Core Members to A!TLC.

2021-2022 A!TLC HIGHLIGHTS

- Dedicated time for each Student Researcher to work on individualized goals and areas of interest
- Virtual Tours: Coral Reefs in Hawaii and Alaska (Spring 2021); Amazon Rainforest (Fall 2021)
- App Seminars: Calm Connect; Podcasts (Spring 2021)
- Activities: no-bake recipes (ice-cream, cheesecake); cherry blossom and pillow painting, patio stone decorating, popsicle birdhouses, summer wreaths, tie dye shirts (Spring 2021); marble mugs, pumpkin carving, paint night (Fall 2021); Online Escape Room (Winter 2022); In-Person program day at Sportplex (January 2022);
- Weekly yoga sessions co-facilitated by Rebekah Lindenbach and Ruth Blaser from 'Yoga for Every Body'
- Workshops on Human Rights, Supported Decision Making, and Astonishing Artists which included three different art mediums - Graphite, tissue paper, watercolour (Winter 2022)
- Gala Video Prep-work (Winter 2022)
- Book Club: Completed reading *If at Birth You Don't Succeed* by Zach Anner and *The Time Between Us* by Tamara Ireland Stone;
- Partnered with University of Calgary Youth Digital Storytelling Project to create short videos about life transitions (Winter 2022)



A!TLC 2021-2022



BETTER TOGETHER - A YEAR IN REVIEW

2021-2022 SOCIAL CLUB HIGHLIGHTS

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

Events typically take place throughout the community. 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.

We are thankful for our collaboration with the City of Regina. 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.”



2021-2022 SOCIAL CLUB HIGHLIGHTS



VIRTUAL ESCAPE, NHL GAME VIEWING, VIRTUAL GAMES NIGHT, TIE-DYE AND SPLATTER PAINT PARTY, MOVIE NIGHT, PIZZA IN THE PARK, BOWLING NIGHT, COUGARS WOMEN'S BASKETBALL GAME, CHRISTMAS MOVIE NIGHT VALENTINE'S MIXER, PAINT NIGHT

2021/2022 SUMMER LITERACY HIGHLIGHTS



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

Summer Literacy 2021 was offered virtually, with 12 Core Members participating. 1 Core Member received individual literacy lessons, and 11 Core Members attended group lessons. Summer Staff had to be extra creative to deliver fun and age appropriate activities, all while navigating virtual world! Program sessions focused on traditional, health, financial, and cultural literacy as well as creative writing.

Optional Tuesday evening sessions were offered in-person and focused on recreation and art.

2021-2022 SUMMER LITERACY HIGHLIGHTS



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. Fall 2021 we were happy to be back on campus. Astonished! staff were creative in offering blended program delivery for those student researchers who wanted to attend program in person and for those who desired to stay at home. This year saw us welcome back in-person volunteers and multiple placement students from the Faculty of Kinesiology and Health Studies and the Faculty of Education. We continue to seek out and build partnerships with University Faculty and explore mutually beneficial collaborations.

COMMUNITY PROFILE AND FUNDRAISING

Key Successes



*Campaign
goals
reached*

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.

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



Partnerships

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, the community, and our annual contract with Community Living Service Delivery we were able to meet the 2021-2022 budget and build towards establishing a healthy operating reserve.

- 2021 Grow Gratitude Campaign (\$18,307)
- 2022 Spring Fundraiser (\$29,558)
- Summer Raffle (\$1,535)
- Walk and Roll (\$30,774)
- 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 Fun; Intact Better Communities Program)



City of Regina





ASTONISHED!
BETTER TOGETHER

**BONNIE C VICKARYOUS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

306.737.9560

BCV@BEINGASTONISHED.COM

WWW.BEINGASTONISHED.COM