

Working to make our city's public transit system more accessible for all

by Angela Marley

Did you know you could have a voice in promoting accessible public transportation in Toronto?

I didn't either until I became a Wheel-Trans customer. I received their *Community Link* newsletter and read about the TTC's Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation (ACAT).

I was no longer working and I had unstructured time. I knew my skills and experience would be useful, so I applied to volunteer on the ACAT. This volunteer work has been beneficial for me, and has given me an opportunity to make a difference in people's lives by working to make our transit more accessible.

ACAT represents seniors, people with disabilities and the community-at-large, and reports directly to the TTC. To improve accessibility, ACAT gives guidance and advice to the TTC on design, policies, vehicles and day-to-day operations, not only regarding Wheel-Trans but also the conventional system and community bus services.

ACAT is the only advisory committee of the TTC and is made up of 15 volunteers. Members live in the city of Toronto and use public transit. The committee is composed of members representing a range of disabilities, mobility issues, seniors and the community-at-large. They do not have to be Wheel-Trans registrants.

I was appointed to the committee in 2008. I am now in the second year of a three year

term. All members serve for three years, with five members replaced each year. This system provides a balance of ongoing renewal and stability for continuing the work of making transit in Toronto more accessible.

The TTC holds ACAT orientation sessions each year in October. Prospective committee members gain information about ACAT and its work. Applications are submitted, interviews held and the TTC makes the appointment of new members.

ACAT holds monthly public meetings at the TTC head office (above the Davisville subway station) on the last Thursday of each month. By making a request in advance, members of the public can present a five minute deputation on issues relating to accessible public transportation.

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Living with MS

Accessible and full service medical care stands out at barrier free clinic

While Penny Goldberg says her former family doctor was wonderful and knowledgeable about women's issues, she didn't have that much experience in the area of disability.

So in 1999, she visited the barrier free clinic at Anne Johnston Health Station. "The first time, the doctor just talked to me for an hour, no exam," Penny says. She was surprised at being given this amount of time just to give her history to the doctor.

The next time she visited, she had her first physical exam, and she says she has found that the appointments at the clinic are much longer than what she received at a standard doctor's office.

Shortly after the birth of her second child in 1990, Penny started to notice coordination problems. At first, she attributed her symptoms to recovery from her pregnancy. But within four months, she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis.

When visiting her family doctor, whom Penny continued to see after diagnosis, she says she had difficulty with transferring to the examination table, which was too high. At the barrier free clinic, the examination tables are adjustable – they move up and down. There are also ceiling lifts present in every room.

Another benefit to being a patient of the clinic is the full time attendant services. An attendant can help with dressing, catheterization, toileting, feeding and many other tasks. They basically assist in everything, Penny says, even helping to take winter coats on and off.

Lucy Nyman, peer support coordinator at Anne Johnston Health Station, says that the attendant care is one of the things that makes the barrier free clinic different from

a conventional medical clinic. "It really completes that accommodation and accessibility piece," she says.

She has worked at the station for more than 10 years and says that another reason Anne Johnston Health Station stands out is because it strives to be a full service clinic that employs a range of health care workers, including counsellors, health promoters and chiropodists as well as primary care nurses and doctors.

Since Penny's first visit, she has become involved with Anne Johnston Health Station as more than a patient of the clinic – she leads the POW (People on Wheels) support group as well.

Penny says her positive experiences at the barrier free clinic go beyond just the medical aspect. She says she appreciates that the organization has a thorough written complaint system, so if there was an issue, she would be able to easily report it.

And she says she is always impressed by the attitude of everyone at Anne Johnston "They are helpful and try to accommodate the needs of everyone. That applies to all the staff," she says. "If I didn't have the Anne Johnston Health Station, I don't know where I'd be."♦

The Anne Johnston Health Station is located at 2398 Yonge Street and can be reached by telephone at 416-486-8666 or e-mail at info@ajhs.ca.

Do you have a story you would like to share? Contact Julie at 416-967-3046 or julie.crljen@mssociety.ca.

Chapter Events

The Toronto Chapter presents...

Holiday Party

December 10, 2009

Bayview Ave./Eglinton Ave.

11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

\$15/single \$25/pair

A ticket is required for admission. No tickets will be sold at the door. Tickets will be available at chapter events or purchase a ticket by calling Patricia at 416-967-3036.



Featuring a delicious three-course meal and entertainment by **The Sparklettes** 🎵

Annual General Meeting 2009

Saturday, November 21, 2009

Villa Colombo, Sala Caboto

40 Playfair Ave.

\$5/person registration fee

10 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. – Registration

10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. – AGM

~Lunch will be provided~



Guest speaker: Dr. Liesly Lee, consultant neurologist at the Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre
Topic: Update on the Management of Multiple Sclerosis in 2009

This event is made possible by an unrestricted educational grant from Biogen Idec Canada Inc.

Event Registration

If you would like to register for an event, please contact the chapter by telephone, e-mail or by using our online form.

☎ Telephone

416-922-6600 ext. 2501

✉ E-mail

torontoevents@mssociety.ca

🌐 Online

www.mssociety.ca/toronto
(Click on “Events”)

Support Groups

The Toronto Chapter is affiliated with several support groups meeting in different areas of the city. To find the group that best fits your interest, location and schedule, please contact one of the following staff members:

Lynn, 416-967-3032

Angela, 416-967-3034

We are seeking members for the start of the following new groups:

- ♦ GLAMS (gay and lesbian)
- ♦ Iranian Support Group
- ♦ Downtown Group

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Special Section

Accessibility in Ontario: onwards and upwards

by Kim Steele



Kim Steele

Kim Steele is senior coordinator, government relations, MS Society of Canada, Ontario Division.

Sometimes it seems slow going, but when it comes to improving accessibility in Ontario we really have come a long way.

It started in 2001 with the introduction of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA). It requires the Ontario Public Service and the broader public sector to improve opportunities for people with disabilities and to help identify, remove and prevent barriers to their full participation in life of the province. As result of the ODA, municipalities, universities and colleges, schools, hospitals, public transportation providers, and Government of Ontario ministries are required to develop accessibility plans. The ODA is also responsible for the creation of Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committees. While the ODA was a step forward, many believed it wasn't a big or broad enough step. Several individuals and organizations – including the MS Society – told the government that it should do better. In 2005, the Government of Ontario acknowledged these efforts by introducing the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the first legislation of its kind in Canada. The purpose of the AODA is to make Ontario accessible in all sectors (public, private and not-for-profit) by 2025. To do this, it requires the province to develop accessibility standards in five areas: customer service, transportation, information and communications, employment and the built environment.

Through its volunteers and staff, the MS Society has been a leader in advancing the development of these standards. Four have been developed in draft form and one, the Accessible Customer Service Standard, has become law.

While Ontario still has a long way to go to become accessible by 2025, these sometimes seemingly small but significant steps give us hope that we will get there. Of course, there is still work to do to ensure that we do. ♦

For more information on how the MS Society advances accessibility in Ontario please visit the following web page: www.mssociety.ca/ontario/socact.htm.

*Special Section***Reminder to our funding program participants**

If you participate in our Home Help or Incontinence Supplies funding programs, we would like to remind you to send in your 2009 receipts as soon as possible. We ask you to send them in no later than the first week of January 2010.

The MS Society of Canada will be changing its fiscal year-end. It will now align with the calendar year and run from January to December, instead of September to August. Please help us to process your payment in a timely manner by sending your receipts as soon as you can. ♦

*Special Section***Please take our Information and Referral survey**

The staff of the Toronto Chapter are proud of the services provided to you, our members, and the general community. Evaluation is necessary to ensure that our services stay relevant, helpful and current. Please take the time to answer a few survey questions regarding Information and Referral Services. Information and Referral includes short-term counselling, questions answered by e-mail, telephone or face-to-face, literature sent by mail or e-mail and referral to services in your community. Please visit www.mssociety.ca/toronto/survey.htm. ♦



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A Budget
for helping the
Toronto Chapter
provide air
conditioners to
members for more
than 15 years

For your heating &
cooling needs, call
416-703-0571

Resources**Access Guide Canada**

www.abilities.ca/agc

211 Toronto

Social services directory

Dial 211

www.211toronto.ca

JVS Toronto

Help to achieve vocational and educational goals

416-787-1151 ext. 820

www.jvstoronto.org

Canadian Paraplegic Association – Assistive Technology

416-597-3422 ext. 6919

www.cpaont.org

Wheel-Trans

416-393-4111

www3.ttc.ca/WheelTrans/index.jsp

Access Holidays

Global travel and local outings

416-751-7803

www.accessholidays.ca

ARCH Disability Law Centre

416-482-8255

www.archdisabilitylaw.ca

Persons with Disabilities Online

www.pwd-online.gc.ca

Grocery Gateway

905-565-5597

www.grocerygateway.com

March of Dimes

416-425-3463

www.marchofdimes.ca

Donations

Aug 16-09 to Oct 15-09

Memberships

\$1,756

Donations, General

\$7,731

Commemorative Giving

\$9,217

Gifts in Kind

\$8,770

United Way Toronto,

Donor's Choice

\$2,314

Thank you donors!

Your contributions help provide services to individuals and families including educational, social and financial programs.

A reminder

If you would like to donate to Toronto Chapter programs & services, please make your cheque payable to:

Toronto Chapter, MS Society

and address it to the attention of Patricia Cole.

Chapter Update

How fees help us make the most of our programs

Once in a while, a member approaches us to inquire about why we charge fees for membership or event registration. When someone joins the chapter as a member, we ask they contribute \$15 annually (\$35 for organizations), though complimentary memberships are available if costs related to MS make it difficult to pay that fee.

Membership is important to us. It gives us a direct way to contact you and keep you informed about our events and services. It also helps to build a strong community in Toronto, which allows us to speak on behalf of our members with a powerful voice.

The membership fee helps us to provide you with access to services such as funding programs, the MS Toronto, Ontario and National newsletters and support groups.

Often, when the chapter holds an event or seminar, participants are charged a registration fee. The cost of events is always increasing. Meeting space is at a premium in Toronto and most speakers charge a fee to address the group.

We often like to include a social element to our events by having a luncheon or meal. This is an opportunity for networking among our members, and we would like to continue to keep this as a part of our events.

Through your financial support, we are able to offer more high-quality education events over the course of the year. ♦

Commemorative Giving

The gift that helps to maximize the quality of life for people with MS

**Birthdays • Anniversaries •
Memoriams • Bar mitzvahs and
bat mitzvahs • Wedding favours**

Contact Patricia Cole at 416-967-3036
or patricia.cole@mssociety.ca, or visit
www.mssociety.ca/toronto/help.htm

Want to Go Green?

If you want to receive all Toronto Chapter newsletters and flyers by e-mail instead of mail, please contact Julie at julie.crljen@mssociety.ca.

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...helping to make transit accessible

The work of ACAT includes developing and reviewing policies and procedures, as well as providing consultation on plans for accessibility enhancements or upgrades on new or existing facilities and vehicles. For example, prior to the delivery of the new Wheel-Trans Friendly Bus, members had an opportunity to provide comment. We recommended minor but important changes, such as the positioning of call buttons.

Operated by the TTC, Wheel-Trans is the door-to-door accessible public transportation service for registered customers in the City of Toronto. The fare is the same as TTC. Riders can use a combination of Wheel-Trans and conventional transit, enabling more flexibility in their travel. The TTC has developed automated phone and Internet booking systems to make it easier for customers to make their reservations for rides.

Although more riders will be able to use the conventional transit services as the system is made more accessible, there will always be a need for the door-to-door service for people who are not able to walk the distance.

With the expansion of transit in the GTA, the new light rail transit routes and the subway extensions, ACAT will be very active, and I look forward to another challenging and rewarding year. ♦

For more information, visit www.ttc.ca.

Programs and Services

Education, Information & Referral

- Bimonthly newsletter, literature, resource room and website
- Education workshops and specialized courses including MS 101

Equipment Loans & Equipment Funding

Subsidies for Home Help & Incontinence Supplies

Supportive Counselling & Support Groups

Recreation Programs

Volunteer Services

Social Action & Advocacy



220 Lesmill Road
Toronto, Ontario, M3B 2T5
Phone: 416.444.4470
www.abilityhealthcare.ca
info@abilityhealthcare.ca

A round of applause for...

Toronto Chapter
volunteers!

Call Julie at
416-967-3046
to inquire



Ask Lynn

Satisfying a love of books without leaving home

by Lynn Laccohee

Dear Lynn

I have MS fatigue and I'm not able to get out of the house as much as I used to. I love reading and I used to get my books from the library, which is difficult for me now. Do you know of any services that can help provide me with books?

Signed,

BookWorm



Dear B.W.,

The Toronto Public Library offers a Home Library Service. The service is available for Toronto residents who have difficulty leaving the home due to age, illness or disability and who don't have family/caregivers who are able to obtain books for them.

A variety of formats, including hardcover and paperback books, large print books and talking books are available and delivered to you free of charge. For more information, call Toronto Public Library at 416-395-5557. ♦

Contact Lynn at 416-967-3032 or lynn.laccohee@mssociety.ca.

Holiday Card Sale

Packages

10 cards.....\$12

25 cards.....\$30

50 cards.....\$55

100 cards.....\$100

Support the Toronto Chapter while spreading holiday cheer to your family and friends.

Contact Patricia at 416-967-3036 or patricia.cole@mssociety.ca.



Featuring "Snowy Firs," a watercolour by chapter member Patricia MacCulloch. The card is in colour, contact us to see the colour version.

MS Toronto

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MSToronto is published bimonthly by the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, Toronto Chapter. The contents may be reprinted with customary credit. Your submissions are welcomed. Please note that we do not publish information about alternative treatments, therapies and natural remedies.

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MS Society of Canada Mission

To be a leader in finding a cure for multiple sclerosis and enabling people affected with MS to enhance their quality of life.

Toronto Chapter Vision

To maximize the quality of life for persons with MS and their support network living in Toronto Chapter's geographic boundaries.

The opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of MS Toronto and of the MS Society of Canada. Articles on products and services are intended for information only and are not meant to be seen as endorsements.



The Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, Toronto Chapter, is a United Way Agency.