

balance

... what it's all about

IN THIS ISSUE



Growing up to be a Little Person

• 5 •



Artist? Me? Are you kidding?

• 7 •



Peers on Pages

• 9 •

47 years fully lived

"We believe that everyone has equal opportunity to maximize their independence." This is part of Technology for Living's (TFL) mission statement. For the people working at TFL it continues to be a humbling and inspiring experience to see our members embrace this sentiment and go beyond the 'what could have been' to live full, rich lives, like Bolko Rawicz.

Bolko was born in Poland in 1972. At the age of 5 he was diagnosed with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy. In 1980, before emigrating to Canada, his family lived close to Francorchamps, Belgium, home of the Formula 1 races. It was here that Bolko discovered his great passion, cars and races, eventually creating a website about unique cars and their histories: <http://autohistories.org>.

The family landed in Vancouver in 1981. Travel became a big part of their Canadian life: Disneyland, road tripping across Canada, American National Parks (Yellowstone, Yosemite, Grand Canyon), even back to Europe in 1993 to visit national sites and car museums.

Bolko passed away as quietly as he lived on August 15, 2020. But beneath this quiet burned a fire which pushed him to work on various projects. He graduated from SFU with a BSC in 2004.

Computers were his passion and his main way of communicating with the world. His power wheelchair and computer were controlled with a mouth joystick, allowing him to virtually travel and control his environment.

In summer he soaked in as much sun and heat as possible. During these

sun baths he liked to read about every-thing from spirituality, human rights, investments, to music and poetry. He published a book of poetry that spoke about his disability, mortality and finding connection with others. His poetry revealed a gentle, thoughtful being who lived fully in the world.





Technology for Living round up



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Wayne Pogue, Technology for Independent Living's (TIL) Team Lead, was the elected liberator of the treasures that had been stowed away in a time capsule during the occasion of TIL's 40th anniversary by Simon Cox, past Executive Director of Technology for Living. What did Simon pack? Technology of course! Reminders of life before smart phones. The obligatory newspaper (a yellowed copy of the

Courier), office paraphernalia from the time when Technology for Living was called BCITS. A small tea bag, Simon's beverage of choice, brought back fond memories of those who are gone but not forgotten. Stay tuned for the next opening of a time capsule in our offices in 2045. One thing to put in this next capsule for sure: a surgical mask, the most poignant of symbols for the year 2020.



The YES PROJECT is built on the idea to offer our members more individualized, one-off assistive solutions. In order to accomplish that we have hired contract technicians who are working on setting up home automation for our members. That will free up TIL biomedics to focus on special projects. This also includes having access to the right tools to complete these projects and one stop in this direction was the recently purchased the Ultimaker S3 3D printer.

Technology for Living's (TFL) first online AGM, went off without a hitch thanks to the technical support by our Technology for Independent Living (TIL) team. The impact of covid-19 on our membership took centre stage. A big part of that discussion focused on members living at the George Pearson Centre which has tight restrictions in place around contact between residents and the outside world. TIL has expanded its team to be able to have one of the technicians work three days a week at Pearson to assist the residents in setting up technologies to facilitate remote communication. Other agenda items included an overview of the year and the election of the board. All directors were voted in for another year. We welcome back Christine Gordon, Don Danbrook, Ken Kramer, Walt Lawrence, Terry Le Blanc and Anthony Chan.



Bits & Bytes from TIL

Introducing Benson Au

Technology for Living would like to welcome Benson Au to the TIL team. Benson has been working, on a contract basis, setting up technology for TIL members over the past few months, now he will be taking on a larger role as a TIL Assistive Technologist.

Benson will be working primarily in the George Pearson Centre, working with residents and TIL members as they prepare to move into the new George Pearson Dogwood Redevelopment. You will continue to see him at Pathways to Independence meetings and assisting TIL members in the lower mainland.

Welcome Benson!

CONTACT US!

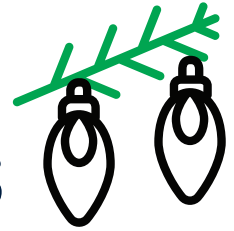
We are always happy to discuss any member's needs. Simply phone us at ☎ 604.326.0175 or send an email to ✉ info@technologyforliving.org

TIPS & TRICKS

Google Action Blocks is a free app for your Android phone or tablet. It works just like Google Assistant, but without speaking. It is perfect for adaptive switches. You can easily create one-touch buttons on your home screen to call a friend, watch your favorite show, speak a phrase, control your lights, and much more. You need to try it!

SMART Holidays to everyone

By Wayne Pogue



The holiday season can be a wonderful time of year for people who celebrate Christmas: music, lights, decorated trees, and of course getting cozy in front of the Yule log watching Netflix! Wouldn't Christmas be even better if you could control all these things yourself? Well, this article outlines just about everything you need in order to control all the holiday spirit your home can display!

Christmas tree lights

A very iconic Christmas tradition is the Christmas tree. Someone else may go out and haul it home, but you can oversee the lights! You can either deck your tree with TWINKLY smart LED lights. This allows you to fully control and customize the lighting through their app, or you could be a little more subtle and use a smart plug, like the TP Link Smart WiFi Plug Mini (HS105). Other Christmas light controls can be triggered via a smart outlet so you can control your lights via your smartphone or voice using your favourite voice assistant (ie: Google Home, Amazon Alexa, Siri). Of course, you can set your lights on a daily timer.

Christmas lights

Even if you are not Clarke Griswold, your outdoor Christmas lights should come next. Simply add a smart outdoor plug like the one from TP Link (KP400). Again, you can set a timer or control them using your voice or smartphone.

Also, using a multicolor smart bulb, like the TP Link Multicolor Smart Bulb

(KL130), will allow you to adjust the colours of the bulbs to correspond to the mood of your holiday cheer... But maybe orange lights throughout the house may add more of a Halloween feel!

Christmas music

If you haven't had enough of the Christmas music echoing through the malls since November, you may want to create your very own amazing Christmas music playlist on Spotify, YouTube, etc., and then enjoy your Christmas tunes on your favourite voice assistant. If you don't have access to streaming music service, all is not lost: your favourite voice assistant is always willing to play some Christmas music of its liking for you. Just ask it to "play some Christmas music"!

Cozy up by the fire

And finally, who doesn't enjoy sitting around a warm, crackling fire while the snow is piling up outside... Yes, the Netflix Yule log and your smart thermostat can take care of this for you. Cozy up using your smart thermostat, like the Ecobee3 Lite or Nest thermostat, via voice control or smartphone. Then turn on the crackling Netflix Yule log using a Chromecast, which you can control through your Google Assistant.

This year, by using smart technology available through Technology for Independent Living (TIL), you can have a lot more control over the spirit of Christmas!

Happy holidays from your partners in independence at TIL!

INHALE / EXHALE

During the pandemic, many people are relying on video conferencing options to access health services. During those sessions, the accuracy of the words heard and spoken are incredibly important. As BC is culturally diverse, PROP is taking a step to improve its services by working with the Provincial Language Service, through the Provincial Health Service Authority. This means, a medically trained interpreter can be invited available to listen and ask questions in the language that a member is most comfortable in! By removing language barriers, PROP and TIL can answer your questions and tailor services to your needs.

CONTACT US!

If you need respiratory advice or support please contact the PROP team at
☎ **1.866.326.1245**

IDEA CORNER

As the influenza season begins, talk to your physician or pharmacist about your eligibility in getting your flu vaccine. Every year, the influenza flu spreads and can put you at risk for other infections.

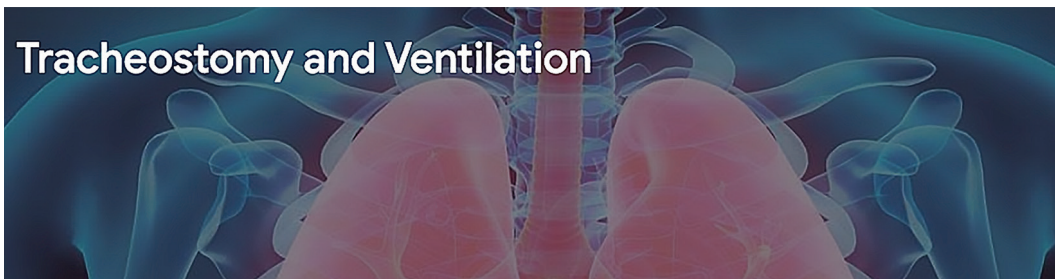
To learn more, check out:

www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-feature/flu-season

and let's do our part through vaccination to promote a healthy BC.

PROP's 'Tracheostomy and Ventilation' course now online

By Karla Kuzmich



For years, PROP has provided a monthly, 2-day course for families and caregivers to learn how to manage tracheostomy tubes and ventilators. Due to the covid-19 pandemic, providing on-site learning for a large group of learners is no longer a safe option. This has left many of our members and their caregivers at a loss. So, PROP sought alternative options.

The result is a remodeled, modernized course with an online component.

Instead of a monthly, 2-day course for multiple groups of learners with different levels of abilities, PROP is now offering a 1-day course for one group of learners supporting an individual member. This ensures that the class sizes are smaller and physical distancing guidelines are followed. It also allows PROP to tailor the content based on the specific needs of individual members.

How did we cram 2 days of teaching into 1 day? Well, that's where the online component comes in.

To allow for more hands-on practice time during in-person training, PROP designed an online component to introduce some learning materials in advance. Students are now able to familiarize themselves with the topics and concepts before moving to the in-person class to build on what they have already learned.

5 main discussion topics

- > The Respiratory System
- > Breathing Safety
- > Tracheostomy Tubes
- > Suction
- > Ventilation

Videos are used throughout the lessons to demonstrate procedures. There are also quizzes at the end of each lesson to help students evaluate their own learning and identify areas that need further study. Students can learn at their own pace because there are no time-restrictions for the course. The lessons and quizzes can also be repeated as many times as students wish.

The online course is open to everyone. Unlike the in-person course, students do not need to be signed up for the online course. The course may be beneficial and informative for the following participants:

- > Members using invasive ventilation
- > Individuals considering a tracheostomy and ventilation
- > Caregivers seeking training
- > Family and friends of ventilated individuals
- > Nurses in long-term care looking to expand skill sets

To join the online course, sign-in to **Google Classroom** and enter the access code **vjr55ao**.

Growing up to be a Little Person

by David Hill

I am a Little Person: a dwarf. Genetically speaking, my DNA includes a combination of a very common type of dwarfism, achondroplasia, and an extremely rare type of dwarfism, acromicric dysplasia.

I want to talk about how I often meet people of average height who treat me in a way that is hurtful and disrespectful.

I am 37 years old. Being treated in unacceptable ways is not new to me. Ever since I was in elementary school, I have been teased and made fun of by children and adults.

I hesitate to label the experiences I went through, then and now, as harassment or bullying. For me it is more important to talk about how I felt and continue to feel every time this happens. Feelings of extreme frustration, irritation and sadness were ongoing emotions during my time at school, a part of my personal education that was not in the regular learning curriculum.

I came across the term ‘raze’: to destroy something, to the ground. That is how I often felt.

In elementary school, classmates called me names to my face, in an undisguised hostile and aggressive manner. To be clear: that type of name calling is simply wrong no matter what size of person you are. I was infuriated by their mean and hurtful behaviour as much as saddened.

How did I cope with it? I tried to focus on being calm and patient. I chose to be the “bigger” person.

As I got older, during my late secondary school years, my skin had gotten thicker. While the direct, aggressive, in-my-face-harassment from earlier years had subsided, it was replaced by staring, whispers and talking behind my back.

I had an incredible ally in my corner: my mother. She used to work as a pre-school teacher. She has an amazing knack for making people listen. She made me understand that the average height population is not very familiar with little people. When people don't have experience with

something, they can be ignorant to the point that they act in aggressive and distressing ways.

Being an excellent communicator, she will confront people directly by asking them if they have any questions or would like to say anything. She believes educating them can change their behaviour. She will explain how and why my body is different from others, describing my medical condition, as well as my respiratory system, lungs and trachea.

I continue to come across people who call me derogatory names. Yes, I have developed an even thicker skin, resilient self-esteem, and a strong backbone. But that doesn't mean I am willing to let abusive behaviour just slide. Personally, I believe experience is key to knowledge and understanding, hopefully leading to maturity. A package deal so to speak. I am now at a point in my life, that when the occasion demands it, I will inform people of all ages and sizes when they overstep the line, taking inspiration from my mother.

I think with horror about physical abuse that fellow little people around the world have gone through and continue to suffer. “Dwarf-tossing” is not an ancient activity from barbaric times but was “invented” in the 1980s for entertainment purposes. Tossing little people as far as possible as part of a competition strips us of dignity. Friends and acquaintances of mine have had experiences like getting stuffed in a locker, being followed on the street etc. This treatment is dehumanizing and 110% wrong.

As a person of Christian faith, I firmly believe in the golden rule: behave toward others as you would have others behave toward you. I like to think that people in my community have changed their behaviour because I have been part of their lives. I try to show tolerance and patience because I know not many average sized people in the wider population have met individuals of short stature. I ask that average size persons do not view dwarves\little people so differently as if we are from a different planet. Remember, we are just a different size human.

I will continue to fight to change people's conduct.

Omar's got you COVERED!

And ... I am back! Last time you heard from me I was talking about my journey to find a positive outlook on life and mostly it was coming from the inside: how I managed to grow into the dude I am today. This time I want to share some of my tricks how I go about to look like the cool guy you all know me as.

Sad but true: sometimes we all ignore how important it can be for our disposition to take care of our appearance. Let's try to avoid those moments as much as possible, ok? "Looking good" is not just about keeping up with the latest fashion for fashion sake. It opens up channels of communication like you wouldn't believe it. People look at you very differently when you got 'swag'. I am not asking anyone to look like the latest Italian perfume model. But I am saying put some thought into dressing as if you care, agreed? If you need a couple of hints how to get into the spirit of looking groovy, here are some of my tips. Because as always: Omar's got you covered.

Start with the stuff you already have hanging in your closet. Get all your clothes out and give them a once over. Ask a buddy to give you a helping hand to decide what you want to keep and what really just has to leave the building. Be ruthless! Get rid of as much as possible of the pathetic stuff you never wear. Chances are it won't win you any beauty prizes anyway.

Then chill for a bit online and check out what's out there. See a style you like? Go for it! One thing I always make sure to suss out: is it comfortable and easy to wear for wheelchair users?

Once your new wardrobe arrives let's not forget the obvious before dressing up to look cool and like a winner: take care of personal hygiene! Get a manicure, a pedicure, style your beard... Hey, if you don't have an allergy, use that perfume advertised by the aforementioned Italian supermodel. Smelling good can become super important when you meet someone hot who wants to hug. This is of course pre- and post-covid, ok?

There is one other item you need to think about sprucing up: your power-wheelchair. I look at my wheeling machine as an accessory that needs to look as good as I do. So, I make sure it's regularly cleaned. I wash the covers about once a month. Good time also to check if there are any wires or other "messy stuff" sticking out. Ask your technician to tack them in when you do your next regular wheelchair check. At the end of the day it's your ride so why not make it a bit fancy not just functional, right?

Last but not least, brush up on your self-esteem. Read my column in the last Balance again for how I am dealing with that. It's extremely important you look good for yourself as much as for others. I swear to you: looking good will double your chances to feeling good all around.

Here you go. My quick tips for becoming the next supermodel of your town. Have fun picking your next style and remember to keep up that lovely smile. In the end that is even more attractive than a Gucci dress or a Hugo Boss tuxedo. Stay cool!

By Omar Al-Azawi



Artist? Me? Are you kidding?

By Artorius Jonkerino

That's what I thought when I rolled by the GF Strong art room in 1997, wrestling to come to terms with my recent spinal cord injury. Every time I passed the room, other participants would try to lure me in. "There's no way," I thought, "I am not able to even sign my name."

When a friend challenged me to do some sketching using a mouth stick (a special orthodontic device used for drawing, painting, etc. when one cannot hold instruments with one's hands), I decided to pick up the gauntlet. While I was not hopeful, I have never been one to avoid a challenge: I am driven to deliver. Surprisingly, not only did I develop a feel for sketching, but art became a passion for me. Suddenly nothing could keep me out of the art room I had passed a hundred times before.

After half a dozen sketches, a couple of water colours and an acrylic painting of a cat's face, the art therapists directed me toward a course —Introduction to Acrylics— offered at a Community Centre. I poured myself into the course, going head-to-head with able-bodied people and feeling every bit a worthy student. My classmates even bought copies of my paintings, both photographed and printed. That was exciting!

After completing the introductory course, I continued with the "Painting with the Masters" class, eventually progressing to life drawing sessions. I took every opportunity to display my work at community events: prints, greeting cards and T-shirts. I created a style of my own: fantasy scenes with curvaceous figures and an abundance of nature, using thick, voluptuous strokes. I painted obsessively for years, afraid that if I stopped, I wouldn't be able to start again.

Then one day I did stop, to take stock. I thought, wow, look at what I've accomplished! I **AM** an artist! My energy spilled into other forms of artistic expression including stage performance, singing and songwriting, poetry and stories – long and short: I learned that being an artist is about self-expression, a deeply rooted and highly rewarding passion.

What does it take to make all this happen? For me: not a lot of technology. When painting, I prefer the old-fashioned method: real paint, real brushes, messy things to clean up and the organic feel of paint on canvas. For those partial to technology, there are, of course, software programs like Photoshop which allow you to 'paint' on the computer.

I do use technology when I produce post-cards, t-shirts and smaller copies of my "priceless" original paintings. I do this on a computer workstation where you will find both graphic and audio software and hardware installed. Technology for Living (TIL) helped me outfit the workstation, so all my gadgetry synchronizes with my phones, microphones, TV access, cooling fan and automated door opener. It's a control center worthy of Star Trek!

All of this arose from my willingness to step into the GF Strong art room. If you also think you can't be an artist, think again! And feel free to have a look at some of my work at www.houseofartorius.com!



PROP: A very special program

By Heather Morrison

The Provincial Respiratory Outreach Program (PROP) was established as the first comprehensive, community-based home ventilator program in 2001. Heather was one of the first people using the services of this amazing and much needed program. Twenty years earlier she had lived at Pearson, the George Pearson Centre in Vancouver, a residential care facility for people with a range of disabilities, for a little over two years. A diagnosis of muscular dystrophy (MD) required her to be trached.

"In those days, only a few people had left Pearson after being on a ventilator to go to living on their own," she recalls. In 1955, the 'Polio Pavilion' had been added to Pearson to deal with the polio epidemic sweeping across Canada. The federal government promised that any person living with polio would get their medical supplies met as long as they needed them. "But I didn't have polio, I live with muscular dystrophy. Nobody made any promises to me about what I would be supplied with," Heather continues. She remembers the cupboard in which medical supplies were kept: "I didn't have access to that supply cupboard after I moved out of Pearson." So, she found herself using items that were being thrown out because she wasn't able to get them new.

Once she had moved out to live on her own, she remembers: "If we needed catheters, we would invite somebody out for dinner who had a supply and asked them to bring a couple of extra with them. Used ones were fine. We washed them, took care of them and then re-used them. Hoses that were thrown out at Pearson? We would go rescue them, bring them home and were able to use them because they would be in better shape than many of the hoses we had to make do with. That was our initial 'peer program'. There was no preventative maintenance for our ventilators, no set up to work on things. If we had a problem with our actual ventilator, we would go into Pearson, telling the tech 'oh gee, the ventilator sounds really awful, can you have a look at it.'"

Heather, and her friend Jeanette Andersen, were dedicated and resourceful peers working with what was available. One day they received a notice informing them that their unofficial program was being shut down. Of course, that induced a great panic amongst all the people using the 'service.' "Both Jeannette and I received many phone

calls, folks asking us where to go, what to do? We all knew there was nothing else. Some peers were told to deal with each vendor on an individual basis. But there weren't enough vendors that we could get supplies from."

Jeanette and Heather organised a meeting and invited anyone who was interested. They contacted the Disability Alliance BC (then known as the Coalition of People with Disabilities). Christine Gordon, who was working there at the time, agreed to set up a series of ongoing meetings with stakeholders and did a fabulous job. "Christine was able to keep us focused. How she did it, I have no idea! Because that group of people, we'd wander all over the place," Heather chuckles.

Eventually the group submitted a proposal to get the provincial government involved. The government agreed to form a steering committee of professionals, organizations and also users, including Jeannette and Heather as representatives. The group was determined that PROP would be an independent entity and not run by any hospital: a client centred organization.

"We all knew what a great job Simon Cox was doing running the Technology for Independent Living (TIL) program. We agreed he would be the perfect person to set up this new program, the Provincial Respiratory Outreach Program, or PROP for short. We joined with TIL and these two programs became BCITS (now Technology for Living). We have come such a long way since then! Now when I need supplies or any other help, I make a phone call and the supplies get delivered. No more scrapping around, trying to make do with leftovers. PROP is so special. The people working there concentrate on what the members need. With PROP you have always been able to say what you need. So, yeah, the PROP program is totally unique."

For Heather and many like her, PROP plays a big role in meeting their medical needs. She continues: "Even if I just need some advice, I phone them. PROP is able to give me the advice I need so I don't have to run to my doctor all the time. The PROP team knows more about what's going on with me than many other health care providers. It's also a very homey place to visit. Everybody knows my name. I feel very much part of it."



Writing in the eye of the pandemic storm

By Nancy Lear

As the Peer Support Facilitator for Technology for Living (TFL), connecting with peers is of course the most important part of the program for me. Over the years I have gotten to know many of our members, and we continue discussing what type of activities people would like to engage with. One common thread that keeps coming up is the shared interest in writing. Finally, in late 2019, we assembled an enthusiastic team to organise a creative writing workshop: Ruth Marzetti (ED, Technology for Living); Jackie Haywood (accomplished, published writer) and myself. The *Peers on Pages (POP)* pilot project came into being.

As 2020 approached, it felt like a great new year for fresh beginnings. Starting a virtual gathering to assemble some very creative minds from within the pool of our peers felt like a wonderful way to celebrate the brand-new year. No one could have predicted the drastic turn the world would take seemingly overnight. Suddenly we were all held captive by a previously unimaginable pandemic!

Despite the world's crisis: the *POP* virtual writing workshop launched (very much in sync with the new normal way of interacting via Zoom). For five months, eight committed

peers logged on each month to greet expectant, friendly faces and to talk about creative writing. Warm friendships grew out of the shared passion for creative writing. For one-and-a-half hours, the chaotic world outside was forgotten and stories from many genres of writing were shared.

Staying connected and engaged while being protected in our personal bubbles was extremely beneficial to our mental health and well-being. The peers worked on their remarkable creative pieces and polished them by using provided parameters, constructive feedback, and discussion among all writers. This pilot project ran from February to June 2020.

I would like to share with you four pieces graciously offered by some of our peer writers for publication in the Balance, a mix of fiction, non-fiction and poetry.

The following are some of the writings created during the pilot project by peer writers. As the pandemic seamlessly surged into its second wave, the *POP* team started a second installment of our virtual writing workshops in November 2020. We will continue until March 2021, creatively outlasting the pandemic by using this awesome way to stay engaged and connected!

Alone But Not Lonely

By Sowmya

Sometimes in life you hit a crossroad. Its hard to tell whether the path you choose to take was right or wrong. I now seem to have taken one such path. In a new land. With whole new set of people. New culture, new customs. New rules. At times this land feels intimidating and lonely... Jobless and home quarantined due to the virus, has added more to the misery. If one can call it a misery. I had been a professional 6 months ago. A high- flying career... But now, in a new land, suddenly, it looks like no one needs me or my skills...

I understand rules vary, and its important to know them. But people are people. They have the same emotions, no matter who, or where they belong. A need to feel valued and important. A need to be able to contribute and feel belonged. To love and be loved. To be respected. And the feeling of negative emotions too remains the same. Feeling of jealousy, hate, loneliness and on and on I can go with it. When and why did "common sense" become so complex and convoluted?

Agencies meant to help... Probably, I am the first case. With a disability and a talent to offer from a different country. An exception here is not example. And there is no rule book to guide them through this... With no friends to share, or find directions in this new dense jungle, with tall and long tree and hardly any branches lower down, to cling on to. I feel lonely and frightened and have forgotten my reason to live.

One day though, a seagull sneaked and peaked into my boring and lost life. Into my patio to rob my sun drying coriander seeds and is caught red handed in action. I can't tell the gender. Slender, white neck, with a lovely eye and an orange beak. Perhaps, it is she, who else can be more interested in a coriander seed... She seems to have forgotten how to fly. I try to help her by beating drums and making sounds. But, the more I try, she seems to freak out even more. Banging her head to the glass, desperately trying to fly through the glass ceiling. Lonely and frightened... I stop and stay calm and in silence... Lean one, the coriander thief has a sweet voice... Cori the coriander thief and TunTun her plump and healthy partner... Feeding them each morning is the reason that I wake up now. I miss them, when they don't come by. But they are mostly regular and peep on to my patio to let me know, they are around. We seem to have a relationship and conversation, a connection that only we understand.

Perhaps, this is the connection that we all need in the human world. A connection beyond judgement. A connection, where we can forgive and forget. A connection where loneliness becomes a thing that none ever experiences. Maybe a brain sanitizer will be of help here! I know I am alone and lonely in my human world but I am not alone and lonely in my natural world. A world that gives me hope and courage to move on. To take on to the high skies once again, despite the thicket of this jungle. May be someday, somewhere, I will find that someone, who will foster me too, and help me find my way out of this dense jungle.

A Tinder Tale

By Tammy

Online dating was a new experience for me at age 50, and it didn't occur to me that I would be treated as anything less than human. Turns out that Tinder is similar to swimming, it's a lovely activity, until you start drowning. Wading through a sea of options is also tougher as someone who navigates the world in a wheelchair, as there is about 600 pounds of drag.

I was looking for a connection, friendship or otherwise, but after a year and a half I quit the dating apps. The weird and pernicious experiences crushed my normally optimistic outlook to the point each smiling picture flashing across my screen was a creep, someone who might masturbate in the corner of the pool for fun.

I was naive in the beginning. The possibility of love, commitment and mutual support floated through my head. Due to my somewhat isolated circumstances, I live alone and people engage with me differently due to the visibility of my disability, I suspect my desire to connect was more intense and perhaps led me to feel hopeful where a salty, hardened online dater would have swiped left. I quickly recalibrated my expectations after seeing men's profiles featuring conspiracy theories, spiritual healers and one close up photo of a cat's tongue captioned: 'Orally fixated. You come first and always. I am monogamous, you don't have to be.' Apparently, there is no shallow end in Tinder-for-50-year-olds.

I met some interesting people but ultimately no one had the energy to pull me out of the pool ...

It wasn't just, navigating the people, the murky waters of dating were different than I expected... I grew up religious

and it's hard to reprogram your thinking right off the starting block. I respect people's lifestyles, but I discovered that I would just like one decent human to swim with please (I don't need a whole water-polo team)...

I know it is hard for men to imagine a woman with a disability playing some of the traditional roles they might like... be it homemaker, child bearer, or sexual being. I will just have to tread water until I can find someone with imagination who wants to make up new roles of how we can love and support each other. The kind of person who understands that adaptive swimming also makes waves.

I am focusing on myself because that is what I can control. I needed to shift or risk drowning... The one person I know I can connect with is me. I will not jeopardize alienating me from myself for someone who might treat me like a pool toy. I am my own lifeguard.

Poetry

By Laurie Edberg

I am a white rose,
I may not have the beauty of full luscious petals,
and a majestic stem.
But when you really look upon me,
you will see that not all beauty is tangible.
I have my petals and my thorns,
but I also have a sweet fragrance,
that needs to be embraced.
So when you see me blooming in a garden,
and I am not all you envisioned,
take a closer look, and gaze upon me,
smell my fragrance and discover my beauty.
Then behold me.

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Untitled

by Dave

There's no need to worry yourself but then again perhaps you are pulling my leg which may have put me in a bit of a Catch 22. I know that you are going and that I can't stop you but just stay a few minutes more and hear me out... Many times, you have brushed me off and many times you have teased me and most times I am confused and uncertain about your intention but quite clear about my hopes and dreams. I just want you to know, I'm interested in you, all of you. I want to explore the possibilities.

Right from the very beginning, you could tell she was in a hurry by the way she fidgeted, tossed her hair, tapped her foot and just looked restless. Although she had shared deep intimacies with me, I wondered if this was really her norm. Perhaps I had mistaken her core personality, blissfully brushing away what it could've meant when she said "I've never told anybody about this before!" Warning signs ignored by moi, malheureusement!

"Let it go," I kept telling myself but my grip on delusion was too strong. Awkwardly and painfully I continued when she finally insisted on leaving, trying to buffer her directness by telling me not to worry, perhaps we could meet for coffee sometime soon, in a few weeks. I in turn insisted on driving her to the train station, secretly hoping for a goodbye, and meaningful hug before she departed. we were destined to get stuck in traffic and arrived with only enough time to check bags and run to the platform.

A tall man with a cheap suit and dull skin boarded the train just ahead of her. She put her right foot on the first step, stopped, and turned toward me. I stepped forward presuming she would come back to me. All she said was "see you later" then turned back to the stairs and climbed onto the train... The tall man sat across from her and I could see them begin to engage in conversation. I wondered if she would soon be telling him the same thing, "I've never been able to open up like this before, I feel so safe with you, you're such a good listener!" As the train started to pull away she stood up, pivoted, and sat next to the tall man, both of them seemed to be giggling. He kissed her on the cheek and saved my life.

It was a happy coincidence that in October, which is “Disability Employment Month”, Taylor Danielson was recruited by the Technology for Independent Living (TIL) team through the *Neil Squire Working Together Program*. You may have previously met him in the Pathways to Independence peer group. Taylor has joined Wayne Pogue, Ean Price and the rest of the TIL team to research and showcase technologies offered by Technology for Independent Living. He is also taking a lead role in connecting students and peers for the 6th Annual Simon Cox Competition in May 2021.

Welcome, Taylor!



TIL has launched a super exciting new project: the **WE TALK TECH** chat show.

During each of the 15 minute shows, **Wayne Pogue** (Team Lead, Biomedical Engineering) and **Ean Price** (Innovation Strategist with TFL) are engaging in dynamic back and forth discussions about the merits and downsides of different types of cutting-edge technology that may be of use to our peers.

WE TALK TECH will air every first Thursday of the month.

Special bonus for our members: you have the option to contact TIL about any of the things the two guys are talking about and see about an installation possibility in your home.

Check us out on YouTube at <https://tinyurl.com/y4zo6nuv>