



**A message from the Editor** *Jeff Moulins*

*Regardless of the geographical region in which we live, as members of Microboards we can support others in the network of Microboards.*

Across the province the makeup of Microboards is friends and family, involved in the life of the person the board is for. We can learn from each and through this process we can support the network of Microboards.

In British Columbia we have almost six hundred Vela Microboards with at least five people involved in each Microboard. We all have different experiences in life, by drawing on these experiences, we can offer support to others that may be going through something similar. For an example some may have worked out innovative ways to find and hire staff for their Microboard. Another Microboard may have developed a positive relationship with the local CLBC office and can offer advice on how to develop a personal plan or how to negotiate a budget.

The best possible advice to get is from somebody who already had been through what is a new experience for you. The people who help each other

can become friends. Vela is hosting some meetings across the province that will offer an opportunity for Microboards in those regions to meet and share experiences.

In the Lower Fraser Region the Families Helping Families project was inspired by local Microboards and is supported in partnership by those Microboards, Vela and the local CLBC Quality Assurance office. This project provides funds to families for one time only expenses that otherwise would not be funded. These families do not have to be connected to Microboards. In this way we are able to reach out to the larger community of individuals and families with special needs.

Vela has worked in collaboration with Planned Lifetime Advocacy Networks (PLAN) and the Family Support Institute (FSI) on two projects. One has allowed the three organizations to meet with families in smaller communities around B.C. to talk about our respective organizations and learn more about the local issues in those communities. These have been informative and rewarding experiences.

The second project has been focused on learning more about Family Resilience. Vela is managing this joint project and we all are learning a great deal from the families involved. Many families connected to Microboards have been helping to set

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## A message from the Editor Cont' *Jeff Moulins*

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up regional meetings for this project. Vela offers our thanks to all of you that have assisted.

In May of this year Prince George will be hosting the Families Focus conference. I'm certain it will be very informative and great fun. This is a good opportunity for families with a relative with special needs to make connections with each other. I'm sure they'll have a lot of great sessions.

VelaVision is always looking for stories from Microboard members. We were delighted to have an update on the adventures of Bree-anne Robinson from Prince George in this issue.

The Vela story and photo contest continues! If you would like to share a success about the experiences with your microboard, this is a great opportunity to share that story get it in print and possibly win a bit of money in the process. The winners will be announced in the spring. We look forward to getting your submissions.

Shanti Miller's sister Gabrielle Miller, star of CBC shows Corner Gas and Robson Arms is featured in an article in the Feb., 2008 of Readers Digest. In the article she discusses Microboards and Vela Microboard Assn of BC take a moment and check it out.

We hope you enjoy this edition of the newsletter, and we would welcome any suggestions for future newsletters.

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## Families Helping Families Project 2007/08 an Update *Linda Perry*

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In our last VelaVision newsletter we told you about a joint project Vela Microboard Association entered into with South Fraser Quality Assurance office and a few microboards from the region. This project is known as Families Helping Families.

The partnership has proven very positive. The project has been a resounding success. Approximately 70 families have applied for assistance from the project. While the project was not able to assist everyone that applied, many received much needed supports.

As a result, many families that would not have otherwise been assisted received funding. One family received assistance to purchase camping equipment so that they could take part in a subsidized camping experience. Another was able to install an alarm system to protect their children. Others were able to take once in a lifetime respite breaks to visit family members in other parts of the country.

Over the Christmas season the staff team at the South Fraser Quality Assurance office chose to forgo their annual Christmas party and instead donated the funds to purchase grocery gift vouchers for the project to distribute. Their generosity assisted a number of families. Members of the Richmond Facilitation team also donated funds for the purchase of gift certificates at Walmart.

The families that received these gifts were most grateful. And those of us involved in the project were touched by the kindness.

We would also like to express heartfelt thanks to those microboards that have donated surplus funds to this project. Without them, it would not have been the success it has been to date.

As the first year of the project winds down, we are left wondering about the future. Community Living British Columbia will not have surplus funds this year to contribute to support the project. These funds were a significant part of the

dollars distributed through the project.

We are hoping we can count on Microboards in the region to come forward if they find themselves in the fortunate position of being able to contribute. Even a small amount contributed to the project for the coming year could make a significant difference. There are many families that would be most grateful.

If you would like to learn more about the Families Helping Families project, please check it out on Vela's website: [www.microboard.org](http://www.microboard.org)



## Lean On Me Bringing Families into Focus

2008 Conference  
May 16th, 17th and 18th  
Prince George, BC

Family Focus conferences have a long and proud history in British Columbia. The organizers are family members partnering with a local agency to provide some of the most innovative information available on supporting a loved one with special needs.

As with all Family Focus conferences, there will be many interesting workshops and presenters this year.

The theme for the 2008 Conference is Lean On Me...bringing families into focus will be highlighted through topics relevant to families and individuals who are seeking information that relates to children birth to 6 years of age, school age children, adult sons and daughters of all ages, and self-advocates.

Plenary and Guest Presenter Paul Rosen.

From an injury and surgery that would stop most of us in our tracks, Paul has become an elite athlete at the top of his game. Paul's story has inspired countless athletes, students, executives, and social groups to get the most out of life - by putting the most into it.

"It's very important to teach people that anything is possible. You can do whatever you want in life. I'm an example of that", said Paul.

Well respected consultant David Pitonyak will also be a guest speaker at this year's conference. He had this to say about his consulting, "The largest part of my work involves meeting individuals who are said to exhibit 'difficult behaviors'. Most of these individuals exhibit difficult behaviors because they are misunderstood and/or because they are living lives that don't make sense.

Often they are lonely, or powerless, or without joy. Often they are devalued by others, or they lack the kinds of educational experiences that most of us take for granted. Too often their troubling behaviors are the result of an illness, or even a delayed response to traumatic events."

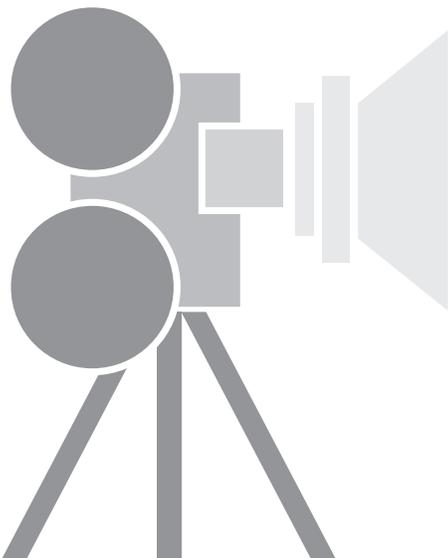
I also believe, to paraphrase Jean Clark, that a "person's needs are best met by people whose needs are met." Supporting a person with difficult behaviors also involves an honest assessment of and attention to the needs of a person's supporters.

As you can see the conference is shaping up to be inspiring and informative. Please join us in Prince George this May for what we are sure will be another wonderful Family Focus.



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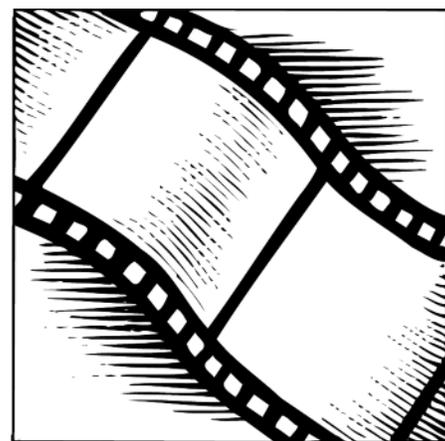
## "HAIRSPRAY" Movie Review *Melanie Marcotte*



My name is Melanie Marcotte and this movie is called 'Hairspray'.

This is a family musical about a young woman named Tracy. She had a big dream and wanted to be a famous dancer on a TV show. Tracy had a relationship with a young man named Link Larkin so Tracy went to audition on the show. It was a great musical with lots of good dancing. There were lots of interesting things going on in the movie.

I think all ages of family members would like this movie. It was fun to watch.



## The Family Resiliency Project *Linda Perry*

**A joint project sponsored by Vela, the Family Support Institute and Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network Funded by: CLBC**

The focus of the project is to build on family capacity and learning from those families that have demonstrated an ability to be resilient. Some of you may recall the presentation on this project that was given at the annual Microboard Conference in September 2007.

The project was designed to seek information and advice from families around the province, from diverse backgrounds, age groups and communities.

There are three basic goals with this short term project. First is to look at enhanced quality of life, what that means to families, how families play an effective and active role in planning and monitoring for relatives.

Second it is a wonderful opportunity to dialogue and learn from those families that are resilient. And to understand how families learn from others about planning for and supporting their loved ones.

The third objective is to learn from families about creating a good life for their relatives.

Then we hope to create a strategy and develop recommendation to help other families learn for the successes of the families interviewed.

The outcomes we hope to realize as a result of the recommendation coming from this project include: families becoming more effective in planning, managing, problem solving and monitoring services for loved ones. People with disabilities will benefit from stronger more resilient families and enhanced informal supports.

As well be believe service providers and communities can become

stronger and more responsive as a direct result of family involvement.

The project will also create a document that identifies provincial resources, a discussion of options and recommendations on how to support more isolated families in their journey to resilience.

Denis Bell, has been hired to complete the work of the project. Denis brings a great deal of professional experience to the project. Denis has worked supporting individuals with special needs for many years both in government in Alberta as well as in his own consulting work. Denis is also the parent of a an adult daughter with special needs.

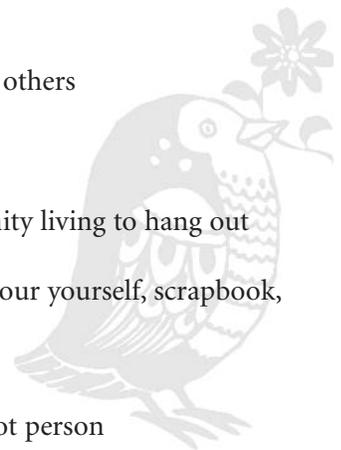
### **Summary notes from the September, 2007 Vela Microboard Conference Session on Family Resiliency**

This session was held to seek feedback from Microboard Families on lessons they have learned about personal resiliency. The following bullet points are a summary accounts of what was said when asked the question;

*"What is it that has enabled you to remain resilient, even during challenging times?"*

*Do people understand what stress is? – We use coping strategies in response.*

- SCREAM
- The appearance that you have some control in the situation (fake it if you have to)
- "Confidence" is looking like you have confidence
- Recognize and honor what actually is the stressor. It usually isn't the person/family member with the disability that causes the stress
- Glean support and inspiration from the individual
- Having others in your life
- Humour
- Connect to other people in similar situations
- Celebrate the good stuff
- Take time to diffuse stress
- Do things that help you to reduce stress
- When supporting an anxious person, use calm approach, let them feel what they are feeling
- Feel the feelings
- Recognize that your stress levels will impact/affect others
- Prioritize
- Accept your fallibility
- Plan fun things
- Expand your life – find other places than community living to hang out
- Information is Power, stay informed
- Take care of yourself: go dancing, spend time for your yourself, scrapbook, mountain climbing
- Nurture your relationships with significant other
- Be honest with yourself
- Be clear about where the challenges are: System, not person
- Be kind to yourself
- Camaraderie: parent to parent, family members to family members
- Talking to people who GET US!
- Faith in a higher power



Much of what we have learned at Vela Microboard Association supporting microboards to become responsible employers has become valuable information for anyone wanting to take control of the paid supports for their loved one.

As a result Vela has been providing workshops throughout the province for families that are interested in managing paid supports for a relative. These workshops have been called simply Families as Employers workshops.

Families who are receiving Autism Funding, At Home Funding, Supported Child Development Funding and/or hope to manage Individualized Funding have benefited from these workshops.

Revenue Canada, Employment Standards and WorkSafe BC all have their own regulations relating to employee/employer relationships and how to determine if someone is a contractor or an employee. These rules are very important to understand for anyone wishing to manage paid supports.

The Families as Employers Workshop helps to provide an overview of expectations and what rules and regulations apply when sorting out the hiring of a caregiver.

This workshop is also a great review for those of us connected to microboards. Vela will post upcoming workshops on our website. So check in at: [www.microboards.org](http://www.microboards.org) to find out if the workshop is being offered in your area. We would also be happy to offer the workshop in your area if there is not one planned in the near future. To arrange a workshop

contact Linda Perry at:

[lindaperry@microboard.org](mailto:lindaperry@microboard.org)

or contact Vela's office  
at (604) 575-2588.



### **A Reminder of Vela's short story and photo contest.**

*Do you have a story to tell about your microboard?  
Have you got pictures to go with it?*

Now is your chance to share these with other microboards and beyond.

Think about some of your successes, some of the wonderful experiences that the person you set up the microboard for has had as a result of having a microboard, and other stories related to your microboard that you feel others would find inspiring.

Share some of your gems and words of wisdom with others.

Vela is holding a photograph and short story contest. Send a story, maximum 500 words (we said SHORT) with at least one photograph to go with the story, by June 1, 2008 and you will be entered to win!

First prize: \$100.00

Second: \$ 75.00

Third: \$ 50.00

We will feature stories and photos in upcoming VelaVision newsletters. So now is your time to shine.

Submissions will be accepted through Linda Perry, Executive Director email address: [lindaperry@microboard.org](mailto:lindaperry@microboard.org)

Or via the post submitted to our office:



Vela Microboard Association  
Short Story and Photo Contest  
#100 - 17564 -56A Avenue,  
Surrey BC. V3S 1G3



To be eligible, all entries must have been received no later than noon on June 1, 2008.

Winners will be notified by June 10, 2008

## The Further Rodeo Adventures of Bree-Anna Robertson and Company *Bree Robertson*

After our wild rodeo weekend at the Williams Lake Stampede last July, it was a long wait for the Canadian Finals Rodeo in Edmonton over the November 11 long weekend. It was touch and go waiting for my new van to arrive and Dad had to go over and above his fatherly duties by flying to Calgary the day before our highly anticipated trip to pick up and van and drive it home so we could get to the rodeo on time.



My support worker Colleen, her two daughters, EmmaJade and Lisa, and I packed up Friday morning and set off in the snow for the Rocky Mountains and Edmonton. The roads were great and by the time we hit Jasper it was sunny and clear. We had to slow right down before entering Jasper due to a family of caribou sauntering the roads as if they owned them. One of them was only a couple of feet from me - I was glad to have a window between him and I - he was HUGE! We had lunch in Jasper and walked around for a bit. We would have loved to stay and really see the town but we didn't want to get into Edmonton too late. One disappointment with Jasper was wheelchair access to various stores and restaurants. We finally hit the A&W which had ramp access but it was very steep with a very tight corner. The wide sidewalks and sloped curbs at crosswalks did help to make up for it though.

Well, it was dark by the time we hit Edmonton and Colleen drove past the exit for our hotel but we took the next one and pulled up to our rodeo digs. Colleen and the girls rearranged the room to accommodate my wheelchair and we got ready for bed and tried to relax before going to sleep. That is easier said than done though when you have four tired and giddy females in one room. Everybody kept switching beds and jostling for the best place to sleep. I laughed until I got the hiccoughs. Colleen finally shut off the lights and told us all to go to sleep. You would have thought that would have worked but its amazing the things you can find to laugh at in the dark when you are trying to be quiet.



After finally "hitting the hay", we managed to sleep in a bit since the rodeo didn't start until the evening on Saturday. We hit West Edmonton Mall for a quick look around. When the rodeo comes to Edmonton, it really comes!! Cowboys and cowgirls were everywhere! Every where we looked it seemed as though somebody was selling cowboy hats

and boots. The mall turns the ice oval into a bull riding ring. Country music was blaring from every store. The mall was so packed, you could barely move. I was glad we were only there briefly today. Line ups to purchase items were very long. We made plans to return on Monday and Colleen and I set out to Rexall Centre for the rodeo.

After the Williams Lake Stampede, Colleen and I had gone to the West of the Rockies Championship Rodeo at home in Prince George. It was a little more polished than Williams Lake but compared to the CFR in Edmonton, it was a backyard picnic. Rexall Centre was buzzing with people. Traffic was snarled for a mile all around the centre. Thanks to wheelchair parking, we got in the main parking lot so only had a short walk to the entrance.

This is one polished rodeo. The opening ceremonies included fireworks, burning sand and sparklers everywhere. The big screen above the arena area showed us all the finer details we might have otherwise missed by sitting up high. The place was packed - over 15,000 people in the arena to watch the rodeo - that's more than double the number of people that were at the William's Lake Stampede over all four days!

Once again we watched bucking broncos, calf-roping, steer wrestling and bull-riding. We recognized some of the names from both Williams Lake and Prince George but there were also cowboys from Australia, Texas, Montana and California. The big screen gave us the opportunity to watch slow motion replays of the spills and thrills. The bull-riding event is always fun to watch but Edmonton does it up right. Where

## The Further Rodeo Adventures of Bree-Anna Robertson and Company Cont.'

most rodeos blast a horn when the rider has successfully made his 8 second ride, the CFR sets off fireworks (I wonder how the bull feels about that). At the end of the two hours, I didn't want to leave but with everybody else heading out, Colleen finally convinced me we needed to get our rest for tomorrow's event.

Sunday afternoon we returned for more rodeo excitement. We shopped along the corridor of the Centre and I bought a t-shirt. Most of the cowboy stuff (boots, horse gear, chaps, spurs) wouldn't be much use to me! The

All in all rodeo fans are friendly and welcoming. The building was very wheelchair accessible and everybody was eager to make sure we were having fun. It felt like a really big rodeo family reunion!

With the show over, we tried to go out for a nice dinner. It took four tries at different restaurants before we found one that had less than an hour wait. Guess there were a lot of hungry cowboys in town! We all fell into bed exhausted Sunday night and planned to sleep in Monday before we headed to the mall to power shop

wheel ride. Since it wasn't very busy the ride worker thought he would be nice and kept us on the ride until Colleen couldn't take it any more and asked him to let us off. I was having a blast - laughing and squealing at EmmaJade and Lisa who were on the ground taking pictures. The next ride was a fast, circular ride and Colleen asked EmmaJade to take some photos but the ride was so fast and my head was barely visible above the side that she never managed to get me in any of the darn pictures. We played some arcade games and then decided to head back to the hotel. The wind had picked up and the street lights were swaying, road signs were rocking back and forth and debris was flying all over the streets. It was hard to stand up and walk against the wind (yeah! For my power chair!!).

The next morning the wind seemed even stronger. EmmaJade and Lisa tried to load the van and almost lost some of our stuff as the wind whipped everything around. We managed to get our stuff inside and took off towards home. The van rocked back and forth in the wind on the freeway and Colleen had a white knuckle experience trying to keep us on the road while we all prayed to get out of the prairie and find a wind break, meaning the Rocky Mountains! By the time we made it to Jasper we were back to clear weather and easy traveling. We took some time to see more of Jasper and slowly made our way home as it started to snow. Rodeo season may be over for this season but as we rolled into the driveway there was already talk about next summer's Stampede!



rodeo had a packed house at over 17,000 people. The place was buzzing. The wheelchair section was packed today for the final showing and awards ceremony. I guess this is the final rodeo for this year. Colleen promises to keep up with our favorite bull-riders on T.V. and by next year we'll be ready for new rodeo adventures.

but I was too excited so I woke up early and made everyone get up before they wanted to. The mall was less busy than it had been on Saturday. We walked for hours and spent lots of money. We visited the Disney Store where I got some really good deals. In the afternoon we headed over to Galaxy Land which is an amusement park inside the mall where Colleen and I went on a couple of rides. The first ride was a ferris

*Thank you to all our Funders & Donors*

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*Did you know it has never been easier to donate to Vela?*

If you would like to support Vela's work helping microboards and other families committed to creating person centred, innovated supports just visit Vela's web site: [www.microboard.org](http://www.microboard.org) and click the Donate Now button on the home page. Follow the instructions and it's done!

We would like to thank all of you that continue to assist us with your generous donations. Vela could not continue to provide assistance without your generous support.



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**Yes, I wish to become a member of Vela Microboard Association:**

- I enclose \$25.00 for a non-voting Annual Family or Individual Membership
- I enclose \$35.00 for a voting Annual Family or Individual Membership
- I enclose \$ \_\_\_\_\_, which is what I can afford
- We enclose \$100.00 for a business, Organization, or non-profit Society Membership

I would like to make a donation to support the Vela Microboard Association:  
 \$25.00     \$50.00     \$100.00     \$250.00     \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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