



A message from the Editor *Jeff Moulins*

In my eighteen years of being involved with Vela Microboard Association of British Columbia, I have had the great pleasure of traveling to some places I had been dreaming of seeing. As well as to other places that I didn't know anything about.

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My first opportunity to speak was at Central Washington University. This was many years ago and it was the first place where I didn't know anybody besides my brother Joe and Linda Perry, my co-presenters. It was one of the first times we told people about how Janet and I created our Vela Microboard. One thing I remember about that trip was Joe's back gave out on him and Linda had to try to transfer me. We certainly laughed a lot, mostly at Linda's expense.

Another trip I remember very well was when we spoke at a conference in Hershey, Pennsylvania (Chocolate town USA). Where all the light posts are shaped like Hershey Kisses. On the same trip we had a couple days off before we spoke at the annual TASH conference in Boston, so we took a train to New York City and saw The Late Show with David Letterman. The next day we took a taxicab to the Pennsylvania Train station,

but the driver dropped us off on the wrong side of the building so that we had to go around the block so I could get into the station. As a result, we almost missed our train. By the time we got to Boston we were all tired and wanted to go home as soon after we spoke as possible. I only was there for a day. But our session was very well received.

The most memorable trip I have been on started on September the seventh 2001. We took off from Vancouver and landed at Heathrow in London where the ground crew lost my wheelchair. They then had the nerve to blame me for a delay in our next flight to Belfast! Lori Emanuels, one of my travel partners, stood up and let the people on the plane know what had happened.

By the time we got to Belfast I was quite tired but I went for my first Guinness. I slept most of the ninth, to recover from jet lag. On the tenth we went around town sightseeing. It's a lovely city but we also saw damage as a result of the "troubles". September the eleventh started out to be a good day we had a meeting that evening so most of us decided to go shopping.

Unfortunately those of us shopping found out about the World Trade Center and the Pentagon attacks while we were out. Linda Perry was back at the hotel working and when we got back we considered whether or not to cancel our evening meeting. One of the reasons we were in Belfast was to present at an

innovations conference. Lori, Linda and I spoke about our experiences in B.C. developing Vela Microboards and exploring how microboards could work in Northern Ireland.

During the same trip we went to County Offal, in the Republic of Ireland. I have to confess that I was quite stupid, the night before the trip Linda suggested politely to not have any alcohol because the roads were very curvy and I could get motion sickness. I didn't listen and Linda was right, I certainly experienced the

challenges of motion sickness first hand! The last time I spoke at a TASH conference was in Reno in 2005. I found that over the years as Vela Microboards are getting more exposure and the concept is growing in popularity in other places governments are discovering what we have known for years here in B.C. - people with microboards are often happier and healthier than people in other situations. It amazing how such a simple idea started in Winnipeg, but grown in British Columbia by Vela

Microboard Association, has become a great success whatever the right supports and assistance are provided.

As I think about history of Microboards from the original three started in Vancouver in 1989 to Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, Virginia, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and Western Australia we have had the opportunity to support positive change in so many people lives. What an adventure and honour!

A message from Vela's Executive Director *Linda Perry*



I consider myself extremely blessed. Through my work with Vela I have had the privilege of getting to know so many inspiring, creative, people connected to microboards in B.C. And I have learned so much from all of you. I have been welcomed into many communities in our province. I have experienced through you, how diverse and resourceful our communities are.

On the strength of your support and the lessons we have collectively learned I have been further blessed with the opportunity to take our collective experiences further afield. I have visited with many wonderful and inspiring individuals and families in the U.S., U.K. and most recently in Australia.

We now have direct connections in Virginia, Pennsylvania, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and Western Australia.

I have been welcomed into the homes of families in Blacksburg, Philadelphia, Cushendon, Tullamore, Perth, and many more lovely and interesting places. What great fortune.

We all want to connect in meaningful ways. And everyone, given the right opportunity, has a contribution to make.

During the visits, within B.C. and beyond, I have found many common threads. We all crave a sense of belonging and accomplishment. We all want to connect in meaningful ways. And everyone, given the right opportunity, has a contribution to make. Many of you do this through the microboards you sit on. Those that have a microboard have been able to realize their contribution through the support and assistance of their microboards.

By networking we are able to share our learning about contribution and share our innovative ideas.

Many of the people involved with microboards in B.C. have connected to each other through our conference, regional meetings, via telephone calls and email. Often there are discussions about what is going on beyond B.C. Some of you have expressed curiosity about the microboards Vela has assisted beyond B.C.'s borders. This newsletter is dedicated to learning about the experiences of those microboards outside of B.C.

Individuals in Northern Ireland, Virginia and Australia have all contributed stories for this newsletter. I'm sure you will enjoy hearing about their developments and will recognize many common themes.

Warmest wishes,

Linda

Community Opportunities - Community Inclusion Project

Through a grant from the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities, Community Opportunities is, over a 2-year period, partnering with several public and private agencies to expand community inclusion support options for people with developmental and other disabilities. One of those partner agencies, Wall Residences, provides a wide array of services throughout western and central Virginia. Most services are small (one to three person) and individualized, with support often provided in “sponsored residential” arrangements (where providers and people with disabilities share homes) or small group homes. The focus of the grant project is to develop support for people who are institutionalized or in danger of institutionalization, helping more Virginians with disabilities live ordinary lives in the community, surrounded by networks of caring, committed friends.



Tim with friends Felecia and Pat

They can be for Tim what we all need when times are tough - folks who support us unconditionally, no matter what.

Over the years, Tim has lost contact with his family, a loss which deeply affects him.

One of the folks participating in the project is Tim, a wonderfully friendly and engaging man who receives support through a Wall Residences provider. Over the years, Tim has lost contact with his family, a loss which deeply affects him. Community Opportunities has brought together a circle of Tim's friends who are now exploring incorporation as a microboard. A microboard is a critical support for Tim. Those friends can assist Tim's staff in problem solving, envisioning ways to overcome challenges.

They can be for Tim what we all need when times are tough - folks who support us unconditionally, no matter what. If Tim some day leaves his current home, he may lose the connections he's made with his staff, but his microboard will stay involved; they are friends for keeps.

Tim's microboard can also play a much needed role with supporting decision-making. As needed, a member of Tim's microboard can serve as his authorized representative or be granted power of attorney. Through the current grant funded project, Community Opportunities is also exploring whether a microboard can serve as guardian for a person needing extensive assistance with decision making. If service providers ever feel a guardian is needed to ensure Tim's health and safety, his microboard will be ready to step into that role.

For Tim, the friends who are his circle and, in the future, microboard may never replace his family. Tim would love to renew a relationship with his momma and other members of his family. Maybe that will happen one day. But in the meantime, and for always, Tim has a circle of good friends, committed friends who value Tim's unique gifts - his infectious smile and insatiable appetite for life.

Vela Microboards in Northern Ireland

Vela Microboards Northern Ireland Limited was incorporated on 25th March 2004. It is a regional voluntary organization which covers the whole of Northern Ireland.

The inaugural AGM of Vela Microboards Northern Ireland was held in August 2002. Following this, funding was eventually obtained for a 2 year project from the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland, as part of its Investing in Healthier Communities Programme. This funding enabled a Development Worker to be employed and also allowed Vela Microboards Northern Ireland to invite Linda Perry to visit Northern Ireland on a number of occasions to assist in the development of the organization.

Vela Microboards have developed their own mission statement which says that "Vela Microboards N.I. Ltd will strive to effect change at policy, organizational and practice levels and, by promoting person centered approaches, enhance the lives of individuals by encouraging the creation of Microboards throughout Northern Ireland." There are 12 microboards in Northern Ireland and another 3 families who are in the process of establishing microboards at this time. There are now microboards in each of the 4 Health & Social Services Boards that cover the province.

Vela Microboards N.I. Ltd has regularly held networking events for existing Microboards and anyone interested in establishing a Microboard. Over the past few years, these have included a family Sunday lunch at a local hotel and a Christmas visit to Santa's Cottage in the Mourne Mountains (when we were lucky enough to pick one of the few snowy days, that made the visit quite magical). Another memorable information sharing evening was when Linda Perry and other friends from British Columbia joined us. The last event was a barbecue at The Lough Neagh Discovery Centre in

September 2006, further events will be organized throughout 2007. At present an AGM is being organized. Commenting on the value of having a microboard, the parents of an 11 year old child with severe autism stated:

"As parents of a child with severe autism, we have found Seamus' Vela Microboard to have been an inspiration to us, in terms of giving us focus, confidence and breadth of experience to put in place, a person centered plan, to greatly enhance the quality of our son Seamus' life".



Gill Harshaw, Chair of Vela Microboards NI accepts award

From a professional and policy prospective, Vela Microboards has been widely accepted as an innovative alternative to traditional services. The Chief Executive of the Southern Health and Social Services Board (1 of the 4 Board in Northern Ireland), Mr Colm Donaghy stated "I am convinced that Vela Microboards are transformational. They change people's lives, both for the individual and the families concerned in a tremendous way. The focus is always on the individual, putting their dreams, hopes and aspirations first. The planning works very much from the person out, rather, than the professional in."

Vela Microboards N.I. Ltd has produced a DVD which explains the concept of Microboards from the perspective of two individuals, their families and their wider community. The DVD illustrates two Vela Microboard case studies, contains endorsement from professionals, and has been widely acknowledged as an excellent marketing tool by professionals and users alike.

The official Launch of DVD was held in the Waterfront Hall, Belfast. Invitations were sent to a targeted audience including

members of the press, which resulted in a considerable amount of publicity in both local and regional newspapers, as well as items on a number of local radio stations. The DVD can be accessed via the website at: www.velamicroboardsni.org.uk. Currently Vela Microboards NI Ltd is in the process of updating the website in order to make the information more accessible, using the latest technology available. In October 2006 Vela Microboards N.I. Ltd scooped a prestigious Chartered Institute of Marketing Award when it came second in the New Business Marketing Category. This was the first time in Ireland that a voluntary organization has been recognized in the business arena.

The Board have developed a marketing strategy, acknowledging the difficulty in explaining a complex concept to health and social services policy makers, professionals working within the health and social services settings, service users, families, care givers and the wider community.

The complicated element of developing the marketing strategy centered on the need to convince individuals and their families that microboards offered a more flexible, innovative way of achieving their dreams, hopes and aspirations, than the traditional assessment and planning methods, that result in an over reliance on statutory care services. The marketing strategy had the following core elements:

Vela Microboards in Northern Ireland

- 1) To lobby senior health and social service decision makers at the Department of Health and Social Services, the four Health and Social Services Boards, Trusts throughout Northern Ireland and individual Social Workers working within those Trusts.
- 2) To create awareness of the concept of Vela Microboards throughout the broader Northern Ireland community.
- 3) To provide case study examples to help illustrate the benefits of an established Vela Microboard.
- 4) To create awareness of Person centered Planning as innovative, assessment and planning tools that assist in the establishment of a Vela Microboard and where appropriate facilitate access to direct payments.

In taking forward this strategy, the major challenges for Vela Microboards N.I. Ltd in the year ahead are:

- 1) To promote the concept of Microboards to front line staff in the Statutory, Community and Voluntary Sector.
- 2) To identify more effective ways of reaching people in the community who may benefit from the establishment of a microboard.
- 3) To effect change at policy, organizational and practice levels
- 4) To ensure the sustainability of existing Vela Microboards
- 5) To implement best practice in corporate governance.
- 6) To secure the future sustainability of Vela Microboards Northern Ireland Limited.

Although we are a relatively new voluntary organization in Northern Ireland, Vela Microboards has made significant strides since its creation. While the establishment of 12 microboards is an achievement, the Board of Directors is continually striving to increase numbers on an on-going basis. An important issue for the Board are the considerable number of requests



The launch of the Vela Microboards N.I. DVD

for help and support from individuals and families, throughout Northern Ireland. Whilst these requests for assistance do not always result in the establishment of a microboard, the Board recognize this work as an integral part of the service offered by the Project Worker.

In acknowledging our progress to date, Vela Microboards NI Ltd does not underestimate the challenges ahead,

particularly during a time of Local Government reorganization. We will continue to strive to fulfill the requirements of our mission statement to enhance the lives of individuals within Northern Ireland.



Seamus, family and friends visit with Santa

Canadian Visit Inspires New Approach

Linda Perry, Executive Director of Vela Microboard Association of British Columbia held a series of workshops in Western Australia in May of 2006. This introduced more than 170 individuals, families, Local Area Coordinators and agency staff to the microboard concept.

A week of events involving Ms. Perry in Perth and Bunbury was organized by Disability Services Commission staff in conjunction with Eddie Bartnik, who is on secondment to the disability sector. The variety of sessions engaged families, LACs and agency staff who took the opportunity to learn more about the approach and explore how it may be implemented in Western Australia.

Ms Perry has overseen the development of an extensive network of over 450 microboards in B.C. and in recent years her work has seen the concept expand to the U.K. and Northern Ireland. Her wealth of personal and practical experience made for stimulating presentations where she talked about "person centered thinking and planning", technical issues in establishing microboards, and most importantly, many rich and diverse examples of people's lives enriched by the support of microboards, some living in very remote locations and others in operation for more than 15 years.

Ms Perry's visit to WA is the latest development in a long-standing and growing relationship between Western Australia and British Columbia. The same collaboration brought visits to WA by well-known advocates of PLAN Canada,

Al Etmanski and Vickie Cammack, leading to the formation of WA's own family leadership organization, PIN (Planned Individual Networks), and many other support groups concerned with families planning for the future. The Commission's Director of

Metropolitan Services Coordination, Eddie Bartnik, has for several years traveled to B.C. on a reciprocal basis to assist with the establishment of the new agency Community Living British Columbia, based on his experience with the Disability Services Commission and the Local Area Coordination program. With Vancouver hosting the 2010 Winter Olympics, British Columbian agencies are also exploring Western Australia's access and inclusion initiatives, with plans to maximize the long lasting legacy of this major event.

A promising outcome of Ms. Perry's week in WA has been the formation of a group of 30 people who are interested in taking the microboard concept further, including individuals, families, LACs, and agency staff.

A follow up videoconference between Vancouver, Perth and Bunbury was held in August, 2006 successfully bringing Vela staff and families from B.C. together with the Western Australian group to share family experiences and discuss the overall strategy and next steps required in order to move the microboard option forward for people in WA.

On Saturday March 25th over 50 people came together in Perth to further discuss a project to move ahead with an initiative to create Microboards in WA. This group included individuals, parents, sisters, aunties, children, grandchildren, friends, LACs, agency staff, etc. The group is keen to move this initiative forward.

The group is hoping to access an innovation grant through a host agency to establish a two year project to get the initiative off the ground.



Have you got a story to tell about you and your Microboard's accomplishments?

Any great pictures to go with your story? Want to win a bit of money?

Vela is hosting a contest to get the best stories with pictures of accomplishments of individuals and their microboards.



First prize: \$100.00
Second prize: \$75.00
Third prize: \$50.00



The winners as well as the honourable mentions will have their stories and pictures published in the next VelaVision Newsletter.

Deadline for submissions is: August 1, 2007

Stories limited to 500 words and at least one picture must accompany your story.

Get your story and picture in, let us celebrate your accomplishments with you. Please send your submissions to: lindaperry@microboard.org or mail in to Vela at; #100 - 17564 56A Avenue, Surrey, B.C. V3S 1G3

A conference about . . .

Discovering the Power of Friendship and Belonging

May 3 & 4, 2007

Join us at the Coast Hotel in Langley, British Columbia for this first annual conference on belonging. Enjoy experiential workshops, keynotes from internationally recognized speakers and learn how to build relationships and promote inclusive communities.

For information, contact;
You've Gotta Have Friends
Ph: 604-533-6546
Email: yghf@telus.net

*Friendship is unnecessary,
like philosophy, like art.
It has no survival value;
rather it is one of those things
that give value to survival. "*

C.S. Lewis
British Writer (1898-1963)

Thursday, May 3, 2007 - Opening Keynote - Azim Jamal

In an inspiring, thought provoking and uplifting keynote - The Power of Giving - Azim Jamal will show you how giving leads to finding your calling in life and tapping into your enormous potential. With a shared vision and supportive community, individual calling and purpose becomes even more powerful. Power is created through giving - to ourselves, our family and our communities. Azim will highlight that "When we stop giving we stop living"! Azim, a leading inspirational speaker and an international best-selling author, specializes in transforming individuals and corporations to unleash their potential the Corporate Sufi TM way. Azim has received accolades from some of the world's leading thinkers in the field of human potential including Dr. Deepak Chopra and Dr. Wayne Dyer. For more information about Azim visit www.azimjamal.com.

Friday May 4, 2007 - World Café and Public Presentation - Meg Wheatley

In addition to an afternoon World Café, Meg Wheatley will deliver a public presentation entitled Whatever the Problem, Community is the Answer. As we speed past one another in this increasingly rushed time, we often fail to notice what we're losing - the power of working together. Trust, intelligence and motivation tend to decrease as we fail to work together. Dr. Wheatley will draw attention to the intrinsic power of community, visible in many cultures but fast deteriorating in Western culture. She will describe simple processes that work to bring us back together so that we may enjoy the benefits of healthy working communities. Meg writes, teaches, and speaks about radically new practices and ideas for organizing in chaotic times. She works to create organizations of all types where people are known as the blessing, not the problem. Dr. Wheatley is co-founder and President Emerita of The Berkana Institute, a charitable foundation serving life-affirming leaders around the world, and has also worked as an organizational consultant and professor of management in two graduate programs for many years.

Who is You've Gotta Have Friends?

This group is working to ensure Langley citizens, including those living with a disability, have caring people involved in their lives with whom they share friendship and a sense of belonging. You've Gotta Have Friends is sponsored by the Langley Association for Community Living [LACL] which has provided services to individuals with developmental disabilities and families with children and youth with special needs since 1959. LACL believes there remains a critical need to build more community connections and authentic friendship opportunities for people who are isolated. You've Gotta Have Friends brings together people who have found community for people with disabilities and others who want to share their experiences. This group is designing activities to help achieve the goal of creating a welcoming community where everyone embraces a sense of belonging, cares for each other, connects through friendship, and has fun. You've Gotta Have Friends wants to break down barriers that keep people from experiencing a rich and rewarding life in the community.

Thank you to all our Funders & Donors

Angie's Kare Society
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 Lorraine Ward



Vela would also like to express heartfelt appreciation to Gabrielle Miller star of CTV comedies Corner Gas and Robson Arms for her ongoing assistance and enthusiasm as spokesperson on behalf of Vela and Microboards. Thanks as well to the cast and crew of Corner Gas for their support.

Terry, Nellie and Sydney Wong
 #500025 BC. Ltd
 North Shore Credit Union
 John Gould's Independent Living Society
 Bev Rempel
 Shelley Durant



Name/Organization: _____
 Address: _____
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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 \$ _____

All donations of \$10.00 or more will be sent a tax receipt to the address provided above.
 Please mail your donation to;
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