



## The “Blinkie” Is A Champ

by Vicky Yeung

***“Don’t use your disability as an excuse. Don’t say I can’t do this... whatever your disability is... don’t let anyone else say to you that you can’t do it.”***

Richmond’s Walter Wu knows everything about winning. Seven-time, Paralympian gold-medalist and fifteen-time World Championship gold medalist, Walter is at the top of his class in swimming.

In fact, he is in the top two in Canada’s Paralympic Swimming Sports.

In the Madrid World Championships, 1998, this Richmond athlete won seven of the eight competitions in which he swam. In the Sydney 2000 Paralympics, he won the gold in the 100m butterfly setting a new world record.

Walter is visually impaired. Since birth he has had Optic Nerve

Dysfunction and Cone-Rod Dysfunction, with less than ten-percent vision in either eye. But this impairment never got in his way. “My philosophy of life has more been shaped by my swimming career than my disability...swimming has more molded me than anything else. Swimming has allowed me to go through life tolerating anything.”

He was born in 1972 in Vancouver, moving to Richmond at the age of eight. As a child, he tried all kinds of sports. He finally decided at the age of twelve that he had to settle on one sport to be successful. “I saw Victor Davis swim and win a gold medal in the 200 m breast stroke. That’s when I decided I wanted to be a swimmer;

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that was the method I wanted to go. I picked swimming because it was an individual sport; if you fail it's because of yourself; if you excel it's because of yourself." He has been swimming twenty-three years now and has been with the national swim team since 1992.

He never knew much about his disability until he was in his late childhood. Colour-blind and light-sensitive, he took a test at the local CNIB and found he had visual impairment, or what he jokingly calls being a "blinkie". He thinks perhaps it was a good thing he didn't know. He knew all his life he was not seeing colours or that he was sensitive to light, but he never knew the seriousness of his disability until he was tested and it was given a name. Luckily, his parents "didn't say no me shouldn't do that...never put restrictions on my life...because of that I think I did quite well. When I don't put limitations on myself, it just helps me." He wears dark goggles to the pool for the bright lights.

Walter believes the people who surround him make a big difference in his success. His swimming buddies are a source of encouragement and camaraderie for him. Never introducing him as blind, his friends are a stable foundation on which he builds his social and personal esteem.

Swimming gave Walter immediate rewards. School was not as gratifying for him because of the lack of more immediate results. There is nothing that can buy that moment at first place on a podium at the Paralympics. "Swimming was more exciting back then than school ever was."

"Swimming is a full-time job. I work 38 hours a week. You do the hard work. When you win the gold medal, you stand on the podium and you hear your anthem—that's a



payoff you can't buy. It doesn't matter how rich you are; you can be Bill Gates (and) you cannot buy that feeling. And that to me is the biggest reason why I swim. That feeling is so indescribable. You're happy, you're sad, you're emotional, the anthem is only for about a minute...it's a tingly feeling...it's a lot of fun. All that hard work for that two years bundled up just for that moment, and when you've got it, it's awesome."

Walter also holds a part-time job at the Home Depot, which employs and sponsors him, among others, for employment. Home Depot only sponsors ten athletes from both the Olympic and Paralympic games in all of Canada for O-Jobs, an employment program for Olympian/Paralympian athletes. They give full-time pay for part-time employment. Walter now does shipping and receiving at Home Depot after three years of working at the phone centre.

When asked about whether his disability affected his character, he remarks that he doesn't think his disability has made a great difference in character building. He does on occasion wonder what would happen if he could see. He says he might trade in all his gold medals for a chance to gain his vision. However, he responds candidly, "On the flip side, it's sort of like the movie with Val Kilmer (*At First Sight*), 'Can I handle seeing what I'm supposed to see?'"

**"If you want to do something you put your mind to it you should be able to do it, within reason, within scientific and medical reason...you have to sacrifice at times...Set yourself a goal and don't let anything get in the way of achieving it."**

One example of his philosophy put to test was when he went to the Cook Islands with his best friend who has cerebral palsy. Because his friend couldn't drive the moped they rented, Walter took to the wheel while his friend sat behind him as his 'eyes'...just "like (in) the 'Scent of a Woman'." It worked out well. They went rather slowly, but they accomplished what they set out to do, which was to see the islands.

Of course, he admits there are scientific and medical limitations. For instance, he doesn't think he could go into medicine because he simply cannot examine the patient. But he does intend to go back to school, as his future "is left open" for great possibilities.

His philosophy of life is:

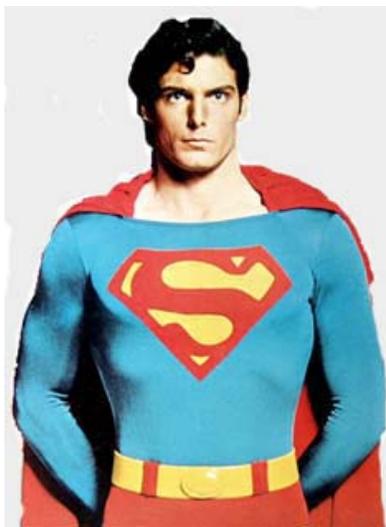
*"Don't use your disability as an excuse. Don't say I can't do this...whatever your disability is...don't let anyone else say to you that you can't do it. I mean there are certainly some restrictions, but if you put enough time to it, you can probably get around everything."*

Walter doesn't just talk the talk of Independent Living, he walks an exemplary walk of proactive living and striving for goals to live life with gusto and achievement. Anyone can accomplish great things if they put their mind to it, he says. If you want to do something, there is usually a way to get to it.



## Super Quotes by Outstanding Persons

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You play the hand you're dealt. I think the game's worthwhile. – Christopher Reeve

Sometimes, I feel I am really blessed to be blind because I probably would not last a minute if I were able to see things. – Stevie Wonder

The problem of power is how to achieve its responsible use rather than its irresponsible and indulgent use - of how to get men of power to live for the public rather than off the public. – Robert F. Kennedy

It matters if you just don't give up. – Stephen Hawking

It is not clear that intelligence has any long-term survival value.

– Stephen Hawking

Self-pity is our worst enemy and if we yield to it, we can never do anything wise in this world. - Helen Keller

The goal you set must be challenging. At the same time, it should be realistic and attainable, not impossible to reach. It should be challenging enough to make you stretch, but not so far that you break.— Rick Hansen

# Three nations target universal design guide lines

The Asahi Shimbun

Japan, China and South Korea have teamed up to develop common design standards for a wide range of products and services that are easy to understand and use, regardless of age or disability.

The countries plan to compile unified guidelines on "universal designs," user-friendly products for the elderly and disabled, in about a year with the aim of eventually establishing them as global standards.

During the talks, Japan intends to call for standards on containers and wrappings of household goods, such as small indentations that would allow the visually impaired to distinguish a bottle of shampoo from a bottle of conditioner.

China, which will host the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, is expected to propose the standardization of signs for public facilities, such as rest rooms and elevators.

Representatives from the three countries agreed in Beijing at the end of October to set up a committee of experts to establish the standards.

Their first meeting is slated for next spring in Tokyo, with the standards to be drawn up in six months. The standards are expected to be loosely based on private-sector products already on the market.

The countries are also considering asking the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) to adopt the standards.

In 2001, the ISO presented guidelines for member nations to establish standards for elderly friendly products. Detailed standards for such products have yet to be compiled, however.

## Wireless Pagers become lifeline for hearing impaired

Peter Svensson,  
*AP Technology Writer*



When Cary Barbin's car broke down at 2 a.m. on a remote road in New Jersey, pulling out a cell phone and calling the auto club wasn't an option. Like his parents, grandparents, and millions of other Americans, he's deaf.

But Barbin wasn't helpless. He took out his BlackBerry wireless pager and typed an e-mail to a hearing friend, who called the tow truck.

Barbin, 35, researches technologies for the deaf at Gallaudet University, a Washington-based school for the deaf and hard of hearing, but he didn't have an e-mail pager just because he's a techie.

Cell phone-size messaging gadgets like the BlackBerry and the T-Mobile Sidekick have caught on quickly with the deaf since being introduced a few years ago, giving them freedom to move around and communicate like never before.

"I talk to my friends almost everyday with the pager. It

is really great!" said Bryan Blaisdell, a deaf 15-year-old in Pascoag, R.I. He uses his Sidekick to message his parents for rides, and can stay in touch with them when he's out, things that would have been hard or impossible a few years ago.

The pagers have become even more important to the deaf than cell phones are for the hearing, since the deaf can't use regular phones or pay phones.

"Before, you were set to a strict plan that was set in advance. There was no way to change the plan if somebody was running late," said Joe Karp, director of marketing at Wynd Communications, one of a couple of companies that specialize in selling wireless services to the deaf.

Wynd started out selling e-mail pagers to corporate travelers. But in 1997, the company got an e-mail from a deaf lawyer, who pointed out that the pagers were great for the deaf.

"We began to explore the opportunity, and found that there was a decent-size market — 28 million deaf or hard of hearing in the U.S.," Karp said.

# DRC And A Happy Chris Feigel

by Vicky Yeung

According to Chris Feigel, Richmond Community on Disability (RCD) board member and longtime mental health advocate, “the DRC is the only place in the lower mainland that accepts you just as you are.” People with disabilities are treated with respect and gentle encouragement at the DRC. “I’ve gotten hope,” says Chris.

Chris was born in a small town near Vernon, BC, then moved to Richmond in 1965. She is now 55 years young. Born with learning disabilities and mental health issues among other disabilities, she is almost unique in that has no labels for her problems, which resulted in her falling through society’s cracks. “Many things other people can do, I can’t...I can’t handle numbers for the life of me.” It used to be that wherever she went, she would be told she couldn’t be successful in anything. She was told more than once that she’d “never do the computer”. Upon entering the DRC on a practicum, Chris was a discouraged soul, much harangued by former experiences. It was a tough time adjusting at first.

Then changes for the better began to happen . . .

Viet Vu, the DRC’s computer class instructor, taught Chris Power Class, which opened up new possibilities. Whatever Chris found challenging, Viet would help her find a way around it. For instance, Chris couldn’t drag the mouse, “I couldn’t drag the mouse because of my learning disability and was getting tired of this dragging mouse stuff...Viet found a way for me to drag the mouse.” Viet’s philosophy is that “anyone can learn the computer.” Because of his patience and positive attitude, he was able to empower Chris to use the computer, and believe in herself.

Chris is also on the Board of Directors on RCD and on the Richmond Mental Health for Consum-



ers and Friends Society. “I feel like a somebody! At last someone wants me!” She feels she has changed in the last few months at the DRC. “It’s a place you can just come in and be yourself.” Somewhere, somehow, someone has unlocked the key to Chris’s potential character and abilities.

She enjoys the computer classes, wishing the DRC would be open weekends one day, or longer hours with more people and more funding for expansion of programs, facilities and staff. The volunteers are “just the right kind of people...they seem to pick them just right here,” Chris exclaims enthusiastically.

Chris is involved with two publications and sits on two boards. She is a very intelligent and capable woman. Unable to read books, she figured out that if she listens to audiotapes and followed along with the book, she’d be able to get through the book. She has read many books this way. Chris has an active mind and adventurous spirit. “I’m a fighter,” she declares, “it may take me longer to get things done, but I won’t back down.” She swims, crochets, and loves costume jewelry.

As a diabetic, she had to learn to cut down on junk food. She prepares her meals with much care, resisting late night cravings, preferring instead to clean the house in the early hours of the morning when she can’t sleep. Disciplined and motivated, she lost over 50 lbs within seven years. She has a will of iron and a mind as sharp as a tack. She encourages others that they can also do the same, if they are disciplined and determined. Indeed, Chris Feigel is an inspiration to all of us here at the DRC. Her independent living is truly a success, as her smile and sprightly spirit testifies to us every time she comes in through the DRC doors.

# Volunteerism



## Volunteers are Stars Gala

Vince Miele, chair of the Richmond Committee on Disability and active volunteer for many years, received an award recognizing his efforts to promote independent living at the Volunteers Are Stars Gala. Former Premier Mike Harcourt, who was also guest speaker at the gala, presented Vince with the award.



*Jean Lin and James Sullivan*



*Robert and Soraya*

“Volunteering brings benefits to both society at large and the individual volunteer.

It makes important contributions, economically as well as socially. It contributes to more cohesive society by building trust and reciprocity among citizens.”

*United Nations on volunteering*



*Chuck volunteering at the Tuesday Social Group*

# The Spirit of Volunteerism

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## The Awesome Volunteers of the DRC

Chuck Andres	Social Group Volunteer
Soraya Asadi	DRC Office Assistant
Doug Bentley	English Language Building Program Instructor
Cecilia Chan	Chinese Friday Frenzy Volunteer
William Chen	Computer Class Instructor
Minerva Chow	English Language Building Program Volunteer
Dennis De Los Reyes	Computer Class Instructor
Chris Feigel	Social Group volunteer
Ariel Friedmann	Computer Class Instructor
Sheri Friesen	DRC Office Assistant
Amy Hsu	Chinese Friday Frenzy Volunteer
Ken Huang	Computer Class Instructor
Ivo Ip	Computer Class Instructor
Ruby Kou	Chinese Friday Frenzy Volunteer
Robert Kovacic	DRC Database Officer
Kathleen Ko	Chinese Friday Frenzy Volunteer
Ophelia Ko	English Language Building Program Volunteer
Katy Kwong	Chinese Support Group and Summer Children Program
Jeremy Lee	Volunteer Janitor
Nancy Lee	English Language Building Program Volunteer
Jean Lin	English Language Building Program Volunteer
Cindy Liu	Editorial Assistant
Shawn Logan	Editor for Access Key
Sandra McLean	Social Group Volunteer Leader
Christa Morris	Social Group Volunteer
Annie Ng	Chinese Friday Frenzy Volunteer Leader
Lynn Ng	Chinese Friday Frenzy Volunteer
Randy Ren	Chinese Friday Frenzy Volunteer
John Shimizu	Social Group Volunteer
Matthew Tse	Computer Class Instructor
Agnes Tsui	Computer Class Instructor & Library Resource Organizer
Ian Yeung	Computer Class Instructor
Vicky Yeung	Editorial Assistant
Diana Yip	Library Resource Organizer
Lance Zinkevich	Social Group Volunteer
Sherry Zizine	Social Group Volunteer

A 3D graphic of the words "Thank you!" in a bold, sans-serif font. The letters are white with a grey shadow underneath, giving them a three-dimensional appearance. The text is slightly tilted and positioned in the bottom right corner of the page.

## Executive Director's word of the season - James Sullivan

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James Sullivan

**T**he Disability Resource Centre is looking forward to a year of growing. To assist us in this we are going through a formal strategic planning session. We do this to be sure the Centre is going forward in a positive and as efficient a way as possible. We

are consumer driven and so the participants include the staff, consumers and board members. We are pleased to have the services of Donna Harrington of the Harrington Group, former Executive Director of the Niagara Centre as our facilitator. She brings 10 years of experience with the Independent Living movement to the table and is known for her breadth of knowledge.

We are starting up the computer classes once more and as always classes are full. This year we added a more advanced training in Microsoft Office to better facilitate our consumers on their job search path. As the class was being planned it filled up. This experience is a reminder of our goal of finding gaps in the services available for people with disabilities and filling them. We don't want the programs we offer our consumers to be repetitive or redundant to programs available to them

through other service organizations in the community. We encourage our consumers to let us know what is wanted and needed.

Our major project for this year is the development of the "Multicultural Service and Program Delivery Model – Using the Independent Living Lens". This is possible through a grant from Human Resources Development Canada, now called the Department of Social Development (DSD). Jacqueline Yue is the coordinator of the project and an excellent addition to our staff. If you have questions or are interested in volunteering to assist in this please call us at 604-232-2404 and ask for Jacque. She will be glad for the support in this very large project.

Programs, classes, social groups and support groups are growing. The Centre is busy every day. We thank you for your support and we ask you for your continued support. If you would like to make a financial donation to the Centre please call us. We are able to issue tax receipts. We are now unable to accept used computer equipment, but money is as always a good thing.

We look forward to another year of serving you. If you find accessibility issues in the community please let us know. We want to hear from you.

## RCD Chair's word of the season—Vince Miele

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Vince Miele

**T**he Richmond Committee on Disability (RCD) is gearing up for an exciting 2004. The projects we are looking forward to include expanding and broadening Board membership. We are on the lookout

for consumers interested in working with the Board, potential members with experience in fund-raising, accounting, the law and government, and general business experience. To assist us with this expansion we are working with "Board Match", a program in the Lower Mainland

assisting Boards and potential Board members to come together. We hope to have some news of new Board members and contributors to the Centre Committee in our next Access Key.

At the end of January, the board is working with Donna Harrington, from the Harrington Group to review Board development and board governance. She will go on after meeting with the Board to meet with the staff, members of the board and some of our consumers for strategic planning.

This year we are continuing to work on the goals we've identified in the past. Accessibility issues, Housing, and Transportation, are only three concerns of people with disabilities. Some projects we

have begun discussions with, and will continue to review include the new Gateway Casino, the RAV line, and the Self Serve Gas Station proposal. An RCD Board member is also on the City of Richmond's Design Panel to insure new structures in our city meet and exceed the BC Building Code. We encourage our members and readers to let us know, in writing if possible, when you observe needs of people with disabilities that are not being met. For many with disabilities there seem to be more challenges than average. Let the RCD know if *you* are facing such challenges.

The province will at some time in the future implement a City Charter. This is going to affect all

citizens of Richmond. As a citizen, you will be affected. The RCD is watching this process and will let you know more through the Access Key as time moves on.

The RCD also works to be sure there are as many recreational opportunities as possible for people with disabilities and those opportunities are varied as possible. The Rick Hansen Foundation gave the RCD a grant to start wheelchair curling in Richmond. If you are interested in participating please let us know by calling the Disability Resource Centre at 604-232-2404.



## New Logo for DRC

The Centre has developed a new logo in an effort to update the 'look and feel' and give the DRC a modern look.



## Income Tax Clinics



**It's that time of year again** — income tax time. If you need assistance with preparing your tax return the City of Richmond is offering FREE Income Tax Clinics in March and April.

The income tax clinics are for low-income individuals, families and seniors to get free assistance in filling out income tax returns by Canada Customs and Revenue Agency trained volunteers.

The clinics will be held at the Thompson Community Centre 5151 Granville Ave., Richmond and you will need to book an appointment. Registration starts March 1, 2004. To book an appointment phone the Registration Call Centre at 604.276.4300, Monday to Friday. For more information on times and dates visit the news and events page on our website — [www.drcrichmond.ca](http://www.drcrichmond.ca)

## Award for new virtual TV guide

Television could move into a new age with a "listening" virtual TV guide which can switch channels at the command of the viewer.

The guide, which has been developed in Norwich, is an electronic programme built around an animated virtual human.

It was created to help people with sight problems.

The software chats to viewers about what they want to see, a computer linked to the TV uses voice recognition programmes to accept their answer and then switches the set to the correct channel.

Created by the Vista consortium, which includes the University of East Anglia (UEA) and Norwich-based animation company Televirtual, the guide has won a Royal Television Society's national technical award.



The virtual guide is aimed at helping visually impaired people

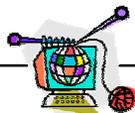
Mark Wells, Televirtual's research director said: "The talking programme guide will be a great help to those people, often the elderly or those with sight problems, who find ordinary guides and menu systems confusing or difficult to read."

## Muppets De-stigmatize HIV



In September, Kami, a fun-loving Muppet with the HIV virus, started her second season on the South African version of Sesame Street. Called Takelani Sesame, the show is a multi-lingual production consisting of television and radio programs and community outreach, and has already won several awards.

The goals of a regularly appearing Muppet living with HIV are to provide age-appropriate messages concerning the humanization, destigmatization and acceptance of people living with HIV, and to open discussion about issues such as coping with illness and loss.



### Great Websites of Interest:

**Disability World** is a new web-zine dedicated to advancing an exchange of information and research about the international independent living movement of people with disabilities. <http://www.disabilityworld.org/>

**ABILITY Magazine** is a bimonthly featuring celebrity interviews with emphasis on health and disABILITY issues. <http://abilitymagazine.com/>

**Disability WebLinks** is a collaborative Federal/Provincial/Territorial project undertaken by Ministers responsible for Social Services and developed in consultation with representatives from the disability community

<http://www.disabilityweblinks.ca/pls/dwl/dl.home>

**Ouch!** is the BBC's new website that reflects life as a disabled person. It's not here as a resource or a help shop; it's more about life, living, creativity, community, humour and the wider view.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/ouch/>



# High-tech van to help disabled drivers

Canadian Press

Edmonton — A new state-of-the-art van to train severely disabled drivers could make relearning the skill more convenient for those on the Prairies.

Edmonton's Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital has acquired a high-tech van that can better assess the extent of a driver's disability so a training program can be individually customized. The program started 35 years ago and has since assessed thousands who've suffered strokes, spinal cord injuries, brain injuries and amputations.

But this new van will also enable people with limited movement and strength in their upper extremities, such as those with multiple sclerosis or quadriplegia, to be assessed and trained in Edmonton, rather than having to travel to Vancouver or Toronto.

The new van, which cost \$189,000 and was provided by the Alberta Lottery Fund, has all the latest bells and whistles, said driving instructor Cyril Mitra.

One of them is a joystick that need only be pushed slightly forward to apply the brakes, backward to hit the gas, left or right to turn the wheels. A person with the use of only one arm could do it, said Mr. Mitra.

Another option is a computer touchpad that enables a driver to start the engine, turn on the lights

or sound the horn, with just the use of a hand or elbow.

Quadriplegic Margaret Conquest, 28, said learning how to drive a customized van enabled her to go to university and get a job as a rehabilitation counsellor. "It just makes an incredible difference between being dependent on other people and being absolutely independent," she said.

Darrell Paulovich, 31, also a quadriplegic, said it felt good to get back behind the steering wheel last September — something he hadn't done since being injured in an industrial accident in 1997.

"I used to be a truck driver, so I missed driving," said Mr. Paulovich, who's already made a couple of six-hour trips. His new van has hand controls that operate the brakes and gas, and is also modified to accommodate the fact that he cannot use his fingers.

Mr. Paulovich turns the steering wheel with a "tripod spinner" — three posts into which he fits his hand so he can move the wheel without grasping it.

"It's great to be back driving again. To be back out on the road and seeing the country. Now I'll be able to go to places, whereas I couldn't before because I always had to rely on somebody."

## Top Ten Store Signs

1. Outside a muffler shop: "No appointment necessary, we hear you coming."
2. Outside a hotel: "Help! We need inn-experienced people."
3. On a desk in a reception room: "We shoot every 3rd salesman, and the 2nd one just left."
4. In a veterinarians waiting room: "Be back in 5 minutes, Sit! Stay!"
5. At the electric company: "We would be de-lighted if you send in your bill. However, if you don't you will be."
6. On the door of a computer store: "Out for a quick byte."
7. In a restaurant window: "Don't stand there and be hungry, come on in and get fed up."
8. Inside a bowling alley: "Please be quiet, we need to hear a pin drop."
9. In the front yard of a funeral home: "Drive carefully, we'll wait."
10. In a counselors office: "Growing old is mandatory, growing wise is optional."





**A PUBLICATION OF THE RICHMOND COMMITTEE ON DISABILITY**

We love feedback!

Any questions, comments or submissions please contact us:  
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Fax: (604) 232-2415  
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**Disclaimer:**  
Not all opinions expressed in the Access Key are those of the staff or it's board members.



Spaces are available in our Horseback Riding Program for children with disabilities. This therapy program has many benefits for everyone. Please phone 604 241 7837.

**Access Problems around the City**

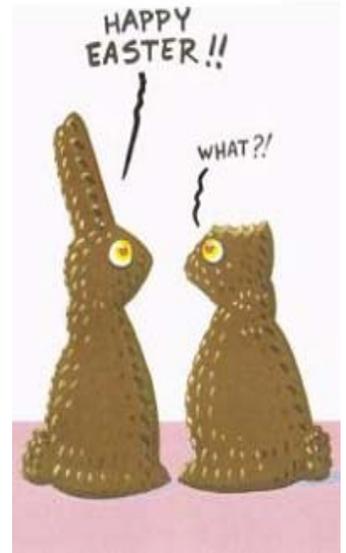


If you come across any accessibility problems within the City of Richmond, please contact the City of Richmond Works Yard at 604-270-8721, 24 hours a day. Accessibility problems include poorly marked road construction, potholes, cracks or any hazards that you may find.

**HandyDART**

If you have any complaints regarding HandyDART transportation, please fill out the insert and return to the DRC.

All requests are noted, even if they can't be met. But if enough requests are made for a service, they may be implemented in the future.



**Ella and the two food-disposal units, Tyler and Maxi**

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