

# Richmond Centre for Disability celebrating 25 years



## Disability centre's legacy is for everyone

*Richmond Centre for Disability celebrates 25 years*

by **Martin van den Hemel**  
Staff Reporter

**T**oday, most intersection curbs make it easy for those in wheelchairs, scooters, or pushing baby strollers and shopping carts to smoothly mount the sidewalk from the roadway.

What most people probably don't know is that the so-called "curb cut" sidewalk street feature is a legacy of the Richmond

Centre for Disability, one that's been copied by other cities.

The centre is celebrating its 25th anniversary this

year, and in that time has advocated strongly for the disabled, especially in the area of access.

Founded in 1985, the non-profit society has helped give people with disabilities the opportunity to participate in the community to the fullest extent possible.

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**TOP:** Richmond Centre for Disability's Frances Clark testing out wheelchair accessible buses with then mayor Greg Halsey-Brandt.



**BELOW:** Richmond Centre for Disability staff at the grand re-opening of Richmond Centre mall. Over the years, the group has assisted developers in making their projects more user friendly.

**Richmond Centre for Disability**  
"Promoting a new perspective on disability"

**Anniversary  
1985 - 2010**

*Building a user-friendly  
community for everyone*

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### Congratulations

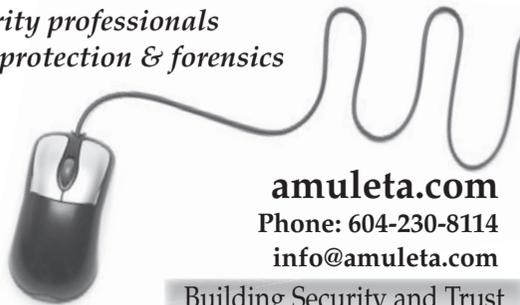
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# Richmond Centre for Disability

## Centre has provided 'superb leadership,' says councillor

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By eliminating barriers, the disabled can partake to the fullest extent of their abilities and desire, rather than being limited by design or perceptions.

Ella Huang, executive director for the centre, said that although the anniversary marks an exciting time in the society's history, the hope is that in light of current funding cuts, that services can at least be maintained. The last thing they want is for cuts.

"We are all very excited," Huang said about the anniversary, adding that the society is proud of what it's been able to accomplish over the last quarter century.

Huang explained that the previous design of sidewalk curb cuts was vastly improved, and what is seen today is wider, more gently sloping, grooved

for traction, and has features for the visually impaired.

The beauty of the new design is that it helps all pedestrians, not just those people who happen to have a disability, she said.

The Richmond Committee on Disability was founded thanks to a joint effort between several key local people with disabilities—including tireless advocate and founding board chair Frances Clark, the first-ever winner of the Ethel Tibbits Women of Distinction Pioneer Award—the United Way of the Lower Mainland and the City of Richmond's special needs and social planning division.

Visitors often marvel at how the city has embraced the concept of accessibility, Huang said.

Coun. Bill McNulty said the city overall has been the beneficiary of the centre's hard work.

"They've just actually provided superb leadership over the past 25 years...They have been the flagship in improvements in disability. We are a leader in Canada thanks to them."

In 1991, the city was recognized by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities with a full five-star award for accessibility, the only city in Canada to receive the distinction.

Thanks to its lobbying efforts and participation, the centre was successful in helping city staff develop accessibility requirements for civic buildings which surpassed provincial standards for the day.

Among its other accomplishments, the centre:

- acted as facilitator and partner in the establishment of the Richmond Therapeutic Equestrian Society, which provides horseback riding for children



Richmond Centre for Disability celebrated the opening of its current location, on No. 3 Road at Lansdowne Road, in 2008.

and youth with disabilities;

- drafted a Universal Housing Design Bylaw that was approved by council in 2007, which addresses the functional needs of everyone, with or without disabilities.

Each year, the centre makes

30,000 individual contacts per year, providing specialized information and referral services, skills training and peer support, social interaction, life skills development, basic and advanced computer training and youth leadership.

The Richmond Centre for Disability congratulates R.C Palmer Grade 9 student **Zaynah Khan**, winner of the RCD 2010 Creative Writing Contest. Her essay is reprinted in part here, and can be read in full at [www.rcdrichmond.org](http://www.rcdrichmond.org). Congratulations also to first runner up **Jenny Li**, a Grade 10 student of Richmond Secondary School whose essay is also on the website.

### ACCENT ON ACCESSIBILITY & PARTICIPATION CONTEST

**25th Anniversary a Milestone of Inspiration**  
By: Zaynah Khan

The Richmond Centre for Disability RCD has aimed to create awareness about accessibility, participation, and the role of the disabled in our community ... and it is our responsibility as a community to acknowledge the achievements of the disabled and to promote participation and acceptance for everyone ...

Back in the 1970s, a teen in everyone's heart was diagnosed with bone cancer ... [and] had to have his right leg amputated. Terry Fox was not one to be discouraged; he wanted to do more ... and ... began his run across Canada for cancer research. He raised \$24.17 million for the cause, and after stopping his marathon because of the cancer in his lungs, Terry Fox passed away at 22 years of age.

He took the world by storm and created a revolutionary feeling towards the ability of the disabled.

Terry Fox is not the only one who achieved great things despite his disability; there is Rick Hansen with his Man in Motion World Tour to help raise awareness for spinal cord injury research, Stevie Wonder with his twenty-two Grammy Awards for singing and songwriting despite being blind from birth, and the many athletes in the Paralympics who won medals for Canada and their home countries.

Thinking back ... years ago, the disabled didn't have it easy ... [they] couldn't enter buildings that only had stairs and no ramps, and some children were not able to go to schools that didn't have an elevator. Some children were kept out of school because of their special needs.

Since the beginning of RCD, they have worked hard to create accessibility to the city and beyond for all people. They created a curb cut design for the city so that the disabled and visually impaired would be safer walking in the city. In 2007, RCD's "Universal Housing Design Bylaw" was approved by the Richmond City Council and the functioning of everyone was addressed in a user-friendly environment. RCD has raised funds for the prevention of HIV/AIDS and created awareness of the disease. They've held annual curling competitions for wheelchair users that brought competitors from around the world.

By continuing to support [the Richmond Centre for Disability] ... we are not only doing the right thing, we are showing the world all we can be as a community, a city, a province, and a nation.

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## Heartfelt is Good...



Touchstone Family Association and Volunteer Richmond Information Services send our "Heartfelt" congratulations to **Richmond Centre for Disability** on achieving 25 years of "Putting the Ability in Disability!"

Congratulations are also extended to **Frances Clark** for her long-term commitment and presence in the Richmond community.



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[www.volunteerrichmond.ca](http://www.volunteerrichmond.ca)

## City of Richmond wishes RCD a fantastic 25th Anniversary

We look forward to another 25 years of continued partnership and working with RCD so that together we can make Richmond an even better place to live for everyone in our community.

For more information about  
The City of Richmond and its work  
with people living with disabilities  
telephone 604-276-4391.



# Richmond Centre for Disability

## Advocate focuses on the positives

by Don Fennell  
Staff Reporter

Frances Clark doesn't dwell on negatives. She's too busy working on the positives.

For Richmond's best-known advocate on disability issues, topping an impressive list of accomplishments is that Richmond is one of the most accessible cities in the country.

"It's user-friendly for everybody," stresses Clark. "I think once the population realized the benefits of universal design it became much more desirable. There are various ways of providing easier access."

Clark's efforts were instru-

mental in Richmond getting to where it's at. In 2000 she realized one of her greatest hopes with the opening of the Richmond Disability Resource Centre, which supports independent living and provides specialized information and referrals, skills training programs and computer training classes for people living with disabilities.

The RCD was actually established in 1985 though the joint effort of United Way of the Lower Mainland, Special Needs and Social Planning divisions of the City of Richmond and several people with disabilities from the community.



Mark Patrick file photo

See Page 32 **Frances Clark's efforts have been instrumental in making Richmond accessible for all.**



RTES congratulates the Richmond Centre for Disability on its 25th Anniversary.

In doing so, we recognize the RCD as one of the founding partners of our Therapeutic Horseback Riding Program for children and youth with disabilities.

### Thank You!

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank everyone in the community who supported our "Lead With Your Heart" Fundraising Luncheon on April 18th. Your support will make a difference in the lives of the children who participate in our program, as well as their families.

For information about volunteering, or supporting our program, please contact RTES at 604-241-7837 or email: [rtes@shaw.ca](mailto:rtes@shaw.ca)

The law firm of Henderson Livingston Stewart LLP would like to take this opportunity to extend our congratulations to the Richmond Centre for Disability, its Board of Directors, employees, volunteers, donors and other supporters for the commitment they have shown over their 25 years to the improvement of the quality of life for everyone in the City of Richmond, and we wish them all continued success in the future.

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# Richmond Centre for Disability



Richmond Centre for Disability executive director Ella Huang with Frances Clark.

## Centre continued to grow

**From Page 31**  
 As the RCD celebrates its 25th anniversary in 2010, Clark, a founding member and the first chair, admits she's proud of the progress to date. "As one of the founders there is a certain degree of satisfaction," she says. "We've managed to work in partnership with the city from day one. We have not achieved everything we've wanted, but a lot."  
 Prior to the creation of the RCD, United Way attempted to bring various community

issues to the table. But it wasn't until the RCD that the disabled were properly represented. An accomplished businesswoman as well as a strong community leader, Clark herself was busy working on other projects. "It started off small and grew," Clark says. "One of the things we want to focus on in celebrating our 25th is that the work we've done benefits everyone."  
 A 53-year resident of Richmond, Clark was born with osteogenesis imperfecta or brittle bone

**"People with disabilities are not different, they just sometimes have to do things differently."  
 - Frances Clark**

disease. She wasn't expected to achieve much in life. Or so the medical experts said. But they didn't know the size of a little girl's heart or her level of determination which would lead Clark to become Richmond's best-known advocate on disability issues.

"People with disabilities are not different, they just sometimes have to do things differently," she says. Despite the challenges, Clark has always refused to see her disability as a crutch. As a child she was forced to get her education through correspondence but even then—during an era when many children with disabilities were viewed as an embarrassment by their parents or hidden away—she dreamed of a future full of promise and fulfilment. Clark has devoted most of her life to helping the community and individuals work together for a better, more inclusive tomorrow. Since the late 1950s, she's been a strong community leader, businesswoman, advocate, policy maker and volunteer. Clark's lifelong love of animals, and her familiarity with the human-animal bond, made her a valuable champion in establishing the Richmond Therapeutic Equestrian Society in 1995. The program provides therapeutic horseback riding classes for children with disabilities that promote physical, psychological and social well-being. The success of the program is apparent in the significant progress made by children dealing with severe physical or mental disabilities. Clark says they don't realize that riding a horse is therapy, but see it as an activity they're succeeding in, that not even some of their able-bodied friends are.

*Congratulations*  
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