

This edition's theme:

THE FUTURE IS ACCESSIBLE

CLBC MAGAZINE

Winter 2019-2020



COMMUNITY LIVING
BRITISH COLUMBIA

CELEBRATE **DIVERSE** **ABILITIES**

Stories from around British Columbia

Advocates for Accessibility

Michaela, Krista and Alexa share what accessibility means to them and how they are helping make their community of Surrey more accessible for everyone.

Pages 8 & 9



MESSAGE FROM

Ross Chilton, CLBC CEO

Recognizing the many aspects of accessibility

Welcome to the Winter 2019-20 edition of Celebrate Diverse ABILITIES. It's a pleasure to introduce my first edition of the magazine since joining CLBC as CEO. This magazine is developed by CLBC's Editorial Board and written by self advocates in British Columbia. For this edition, our theme is "The Future is Accessible."

As the stories in this edition show, accessibility has many aspects. It includes not only physical access to buildings, spaces and transportation, but also access to employment, information, social connections, services, recreation and technology.

For Briana Dillon of Kamloops, taking part in karaoke has helped her build the confidence to access new experiences, "It's helped me out, knowing that if I can do this, I can do other things in my life," she says. "I have met more people, created connections, and done more in the community."

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An important message we can take away from all of these stories is that accessibility is a foundation that supports the meaningful participation of people in their communities. I hope you enjoy reading these stories, and hearing the diverse perspectives on accessibility, as much as I have.

I am also encouraged to learn that many people in communities across British Columbia took part in the provincial government's public consultation on accessibility during the fall. The experiences shared and feedback gathered will play an important role in the development of new accessibility legislation for B.C.

You can learn more about that consultation process in the News section on pages 4 and 5. There you can also read about inclusion champions who were recently presented with CLBC Widening Our World (WOW) Awards, a mapping website that identifies accessible places in community, and CLBC information sheets that have been translated into multiple languages.

Thank you for reading. I hope your new year is off to a great start and we look forward to continuing to share many more success stories and news updates with you throughout 2020.

Sincerely,

Ross Chilton

CEO

Community Living BC



MESSAGE FROM The Editorial Board

CLBC Editorial Board Members are:

left to right: Amber Rainshadow and Glimmer (Victoria), Carrie Derickson (Richmond), Bryce Schaufelberger (Mission), Vanessa Mendoza (Vancouver), Erin Murphy (Vernon), Jessica Humphrey (CLBC Self Advocate Advisor), Katie Moore (Vernon), Sam Milton (Gitsegukla) and Lee Kissinger (Victoria).

A special thanks to Editorial Board members and CLBC staff who provided writing and technical support to the authors in this edition.

Envisioning an accessible future

Hello! We are the CLBC Editorial Board made up of self advocate and community living leaders from across the province. Our role is to work with Community Living BC to improve communication with the people they serve and to find ways to share the stories and contributions of people with diverse abilities in B.C. Working together on this magazine has been one way to let CLBC, and the broader community, know what we think is important.

Inspired by recent public consultations on new accessibility legislation for B.C., the theme we have focused on for this Winter Edition of Celebrate Diverse ABILITIES is “The Future is Accessible.” We have collected stories from around the province about accessibility and what an accessible future looks and feels like for people with diverse abilities.

For us on the Editorial Board, accessibility is about taking down the walls in our lives so we have the freedom to reach the same things in life as anyone else, from the paper towels in the bathroom, to getting a job, to having friends, to the can of soup on the top shelf in the grocery store. An accessible future is one that doesn't require a back up plan every time we leave the house in case

the bus drives by, or our wheelchair doesn't fit through the door, or we aren't understood at the coffee shop, or someone calls us names on the street. We look forward to a future where everyone just knows what's needed so we aren't on the sidelines looking in, but rather we are going through the front door, sitting in a desk in the middle of the classroom and working in the job that everyone wants. In the future, accessibility is invisible because it's built in. You don't have to ask for it, it just is.

If you would like to share your story about what accessibility means to you, you can visit www.selfadvocatenet.com and click on the “Submit your story idea” button.

We would like to thank all the members of the self advocacy community and others with diverse abilities who contributed their stories to this magazine.

We look forward to your feedback and suggestions for the next edition of Celebrate Diverse ABILITIES.

Sincerely,

The CLBC Editorial Board

Inclusion champions celebrated

During Community Inclusion Month in October, CLBC recognized five inclusion champions from across the province as this year's Widening our World (WOW) Award winners, and presented them with awards in their home communities.

The five WOW Award recipients were selected from an impressive pool of over 60 nominees by a provincial committee of self advocates, family members, service providers and CLBC staff for fostering greater awareness of the benefits of inclusion and accessibility in their communities.

The winners of the 2019 WOW Awards were:

- Gloria Gagnon of Princeton
- Katie Moore of Vernon
- Krystian Shaw of Kamloops
- Tara Roberts of Surrey
- Salt Spring Island Fire Rescue

Read more about the winners by visiting:

CommunityLivingBC.ca/WOW

WOW Award winner Gloria Gagnon (left) with her nominator Becky Vermette (right).



CLBC News

Input on accessibility gathered from across B.C.

More than 6,300 people shared their experiences and feedback on proposed accessibility legislation for B.C. during a public consultation this past fall.

"I thank everyone who took the time to share their views and experiences," said Shane Simpson, Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction. "We undertook public consultation with the United Nations principle of 'nothing about us, without us.' We heard overwhelmingly about the need for accessibility legislation to enhance education and awareness and the importance of creating a culture of inclusion, as well as eliminating barriers for all British Columbians."

The public consultation was held from September 16 to November 29, 2019. Nearly 500 people attended one of the 10 community meetings around the province, while 75 independent community consultations were held and over 50 formal submissions were received. Of the 6,352 people who filled out the online questionnaire, 3,776 identify as having a disability. There were more than 23,000 visits to the accessibility engagement website.

A report is expected to be released early this year and feedback will be used to inform the development of accessibility legislation for B.C.



Website maps inclusive places in community

myCommunity BC is a new online mapping site that engages people to share about the places in their community that are inclusive, accessible, value diversity, and welcome everyone.

The site was developed through a collaboration between the Family Support Institute (FSI), the BC Community Asset Mapping Network and CLBC, to support the inclusion of people who live with disabilities in everyday places beyond the disability world.

Check out the myCommunity BC website to discover and map inclusive and accessible places in your community.

Visit www.mycommunitybc.com to:

- Find places that others have recommended as inclusive and welcoming
- Suggest an inclusive place in your community
- Create an account to save your own map of places

The more people add and recommend places, the more places there will be for others to explore.

CLBC staff, Welcome Workshop Presenters, Community Councils and others are already using the website to share stories and connect people and families to inclusive opportunities in their communities.



Find inclusive and accessible places in your community by visiting: myCommunityBC.com

Information for families now available in multiple languages

To make information about CLBC and its services more accessible for individuals and families who speak English as a second language, CLBC has posted translated versions of the following information sheets on our website:

- Getting CLBC Services
- Planning
- Youth in Transition

These information sheets are now available in Korean, Cantonese, Mandarin, Punjabi, Arabic and Vietnamese. The information sheets can be downloaded or printed in colour or black and white.

Languages were identified by CLBC facilitators who work in areas with the highest populations of people for whom English is a second language. CLBC is continuing to work on translating its Information for Families sheets and will share information about additional translated versions when they are available.

Find information for families sheets on the CLBC website under: [Resources > Information for Families Sheets](#).



Langley

Access to the things I love to do

by Bonny Loos

Hello, my name is Bonny Loos and I am 38 years old. I live in Langley, B.C., with my wonderful caregivers. My mom passed away a few years ago and I was worried that I wouldn't be able to get around and do all the things that I love to do, but my caregiver helped get me set up with a Compass Card and now I can take HandyDART anywhere I need to go.

A few travel tips I have for anyone who is new to using HandyDART is try and make sure that you are ready 30 minutes before your scheduled time because sometimes the bus arrives early and you don't want to miss it. Also, make sure you have your Compass Card ready to show your driver. Sometimes, if the bus is full or late, HandyDART will send a taxi. My staff always ask the taxi driver for identification and their cab number before I leave.

“An accessible future to me would mean someday living independently in my own apartment.”

BONNY LOOS



For Bonny, accessible transportation options help her take part in activities around her community.

Last year I went to Disneyland with my caregiver. It was always a dream of mine and I finally had the opportunity to go. It was my very first time on an airplane and I was really nervous but I had such a great time. I loved the whole experience. I'm traveling to Fiji in January for a vacation. I'm looking forward to the warm weather and seeing another country.

I go to a day program five days a week called Explorations through Inclusion Langley Society. My day program plans very exciting trips for me to go on and I love hanging out with all my friends and staff. My favorite things to do are go out for coffee and play pool at the pub. I also work once a week at McDonalds in Murrayville. I am a lobby attendant and I really like my job.

An accessible future to me would mean someday living independently in my own apartment. I would still need a support staff person to come in and help me with meals, banking and shopping. I would love to have my own space to invite my friends to come over for coffee.

Aldergrove

Seeing beyond limitations

by Jilly Henderson

Hi, my name is Jilly Henderson and I am 34 years old. I live in Aldergrove with my Mom, Dad and dog Lucy. An accessible future to me would be to continue to live in the home I love and attend my day program, but I would also love to have additional support to go out in the evenings and weekends to do things with my friends.

I work every Wednesday at J & J Sales. My job title is Shipper / Receiver. I do filing, pull parts and box up packages to be shipped. I have had this job for 13 years and I really love my work family.

For Jilly, an accessible future means going where she wants, without having to face limitations.



I also attend a community inclusion day program four days a week through Inclusion Langley Society. I started going here right after high school and I have made some great friends. We go on a lot of fun day trips and sometimes we have evening events like: Fly Over Canada, Paint Nite, Richmond Night Market and tons of other fun activities.

On the first Tuesday of the month, I go to our Self Advocate Committee Meetings and we talk about special events coming up and projects we are working on. Some projects I have been involved with are: The Self Advocate Bill of Rights, voting seminars, a Plain Language Guide to Supported Decision Making, a Plain Language Guide to Employment Standards as well as planning for Summerfest and various conferences.

I do respite every second weekend with a close family friend. She takes me out for dinner, to movies and we play a lot of games. I have a Compass Card and I use HandyDART every day to get me to my program and to work. Living in an accessible community means that I can go anywhere I want, without being restricted by my disability.

“Living in an accessible community means that I can go anywhere I want, without being restricted by my disability.”

JILLY HENDERSON

An accessible future for people with diverse abilities can mean having a place to call home, a job you love, a feeling of safety, and being able get around the community. Alexa, Krista and Michaela from Self Advocates of Semiahmoo in Surrey, B.C., share their stories of what accessibility means to them.

Living in a place of my own

by Krista Milne

Living on my own was a big, huge dream of mine and I'm glad I accomplished it. I've grown since being on my own. I've become more independent and responsible.

I live in Chorus Apartments. My neighbourhood is close to everything I need like the theatre, bus stops, Walmart and restaurants. I enjoy visiting my neighbours, going to friends' parties and having fun. I also really like going on my own to get a hot chocolate at the nearby Starbucks.

I like cooking in the comfort of my own apartment.

I choose when to clean and take care of my chores. I have a roommate. We make sure to have good communication and help each other out.

We always have an awesome time in each other's company and show each other respect.

I believe there should be more affordable and accessible housing so that people can live on their own, in the way they want. Whether you have a disability or not, all people need a safe place to live, transportation, a safe community, and to be independent and proud. Just like I am.

It has been great for me and I hope in the future accessible and inclusive housing can be available to others.



Working at a job I love

by Michaela Robinson

Accessibility to me means going to a job I love and being part of a team that's inclusive of all people.

I have learned it is important to speak up if you see an organization you would like to be a part of. I did and now I

have a job I really love.

I have been working at White Spot for almost a year and a half. I am a Hostess. I greet people as they come in, show them to their table and let them know who their server will be.

It is a great feeling to be out in the community and have people who I have helped at work, stop and say "Hi" to me.

White Spot has been accessible and inclusive for me because I am short in stature and they have given me my own stool so I am able to be seen by customers. Customers are respectful and happy to see me. No grumpy customers so far!

My favorite thing about working at White Spot are the people I get to work with. They are friendly, respectful, encouraging and understanding if I forget information.

I'm proud to be part of such a good community of people. It would be great if many others had the same opportunity.



Getting out and about safely

by Alexa Lehwald



I love being part of my self advocacy group because we do fun events like karaoke and pizza nights. We also do good things for people by making the community more accessible, like fundraising for beach wheel chairs.

I live in my own apartment. Since having my own place it's been fun to do things I want with my friends and not have to wait on my family. I enjoy the programs at Semiahmoo House, but I also enjoy going out in the community, meeting new people and spending time with my friends. So transportation is really important in my life.

I feel more independent when I go out with my friends on my own. I would like it if transportation routes were more accessible, not just for me but for all people. For example, more express routes, and routes that go farther so we could go to concerts and other things we like.

Accessibility is also about feeling safe. It is important for all people in the community to feel safe and to have the freedom to go wherever they need to go. I would like for all people walking on the sidewalks or crossing the street, during the day or at night, to feel safe.

Transportation is important for the freedom of all people and should always be affordable. I love living on my own and choosing what I want to do and where I want to go with my friends.

Surrey

Creating a more accessible community

Self-Advocates of Semiahmoo (SAS) is committed to supporting all people in being engaged in their community. SAS has fundraised, hosted community events, managed federal grants and received donations to get four beach wheelchairs (including the one pictured below) for the community to use. Two beach wheelchairs are available at White Rock beach through Feral Boardsports, and SAS has also partnered with the City of Surrey to offer another beach wheelchair at Crescent Beach.

SAS also worked with UNITI board member Catherine Ferguson on a presentation to the White Rock Mayor and Council. This led to the City of White Rock unanimously voting to create three safe and inclusive access points at White Rock beach.

Learn more about SAS and their work at:

Uniti4all.com/self-advocates-of-semiahmoo



Kamloops

Participating in karaoke has given Briana the confidence to explore other activities and make new connections in her community.



Singing an accessible tune

by Briana Dillon

When I think about accessibility in my life, one of the first things I think about is karaoke. Karaoke has done so much for me. It isn't just about the singing; it's about being around other people who are there, guiding you through the songs and supporting you. It is about feeling nervous, but doing it anyway. It's helped me out, knowing that if I can do this, I can do other things in my life. It makes it easier to try new things.

Karaoke has given me courage. When I first started, I used to feel nervous. I worried about what people would think and how I would sound. Sometimes, people would say things like I was singing too low or the song wasn't right for me. Instead of feeling like others are tearing me down, though, I can turn things into a positive. I'm doing the best I can.

Karaoke has made me feel like I can do things, even if I feel nervous. It gave me the courage to speak at a friend's memorial service. There were a lot of people there, but I was able to share my memories of my friend and I was proud and brave to do that. It was important for me to be able to do that.

In other areas of my life, I have gained confidence to be able to help and support others. I am part of a program where I can help others with activities where they might be struggling.

Through karaoke, I have met more people, created connections, and done more in the community. It helps keep me motivated and my confidence keeps growing. People support me and encourage me to keep going. This is accessibility for me.

“Through karaoke, I have met more people, created connections, and done more in the community.”

BRIANA DILLON

My wish for the world

by Dominique Baird

An accessible future looks like a place where everyone is included. I would love to see wider doors and ramps available for people using wheelchairs and scooters. I would like to see bigger bathroom stalls and make sure that able-bodied people don't use the bathrooms that are meant for those who have diverse abilities. I want people to be aware of others and their needs.

Those are some of my hopes for the future. I also do things right now to make a difference in my community. I work with Youth Outreach at People in Motion to educate school kids. I speak about diversity and I share my life experience about growing up with Down syndrome. I tell them facts about Down syndrome and I share what it was like to be bullied in school. I like when the kids ask me questions.



Kamloops

I'm also part of the local Down syndrome group and I give speeches at the university and in the community. The university classes I speak to are Masters students who will one day become teachers. I want them to have a better understanding of what their students might need and how they can be better teachers by getting to know a range of diversity.

I share the same message, but I also want to advocate for people with all abilities. I want people to think about how to include everyone with respect.

I hope that by sharing my experience, it will help others to be inclusive of everyone. I hope that the world will have a better understanding and see people as they are, not just their appearance.

"An accessible future looks like a place where everyone is included."

DOMINIQUE BAIRD

Dominique shares her story and experiences with students from elementary school all the way up to Masters programs to help create a future that is more accessible and inclusive for everyone.

Vernon

Considering the needs of everyone

by Katie Moore

My name is Katie Moore. I am 34 years old, and I live in the beautiful Okanagan. I moved to Canada from the U.K. nearly 11 years ago with my parents, two brothers, two sisters and my labrador.

I was born with a rare genetic condition that means I have some challenges with everyday life. More recently, I received a diagnosis that explains why my muscles are getting weaker. Since becoming reliant on using a wheelchair or walker to get around, I have found that my eyes have been opened to the difficulties faced by those with mobility challenges.

An accessible future to me will look like this: I will no longer need to research ahead of time if a building is accessible for me and my wheelchair. I will already be confident that public places in my community will have made accommodations to be inclusive to everyone, no matter their mobility level.

The needs of people with diverse abilities will be considered when planning new buildings, community events, and transit options. Existing buildings with poor accessibility will be given the information they need to make changes, and hopefully be able to access grants to encourage these changes to be made.

Accessibility to me means independence. It means inclusion for all. I want the world to celebrate individuals with diverse abilities and the many amazing talents we have, which contribute so much to our communities. Accessibility means any barriers to living a fulfilled and happy life have been removed, and we are given the same opportunities as anybody else.

In 2016, I formed a group called Okanagan Accessibility. Our aim was to promote the inclusion of diverse individuals and advocate for a more accessible community. We write letters to businesses and public places that we believe have made great adaptations, such as automatic door openers or accessible washrooms. We also send them a sticker with our logo, which they can display in their front window if they choose to. The idea is that people will see the sticker and know this means the building has been given a 'thumbs up' for its accessibility.

In October 2019, I was honoured to be presented with a Widening Our World (WOW) award from CLBC for my efforts in making my community more inclusive to all, due to my work with Okanagan Accessibility.

Here's to an accessible future for everybody!



Katie created Okanagan Accessibility to recognize accessible businesses and advocate for greater accessibility throughout the Okanagan.

Removing barriers in all areas of life

by Patrick Porter

An accessible future to me means that there are no more barriers. Services, buildings, housing, employment and health care would be accessible for everyone.

As a person with a disability it is difficult to walk around and get to places I need to go. Reading and learning bus schedules and routes are hard; some buildings are difficult to get to by bus, or have stairs that could cause me to trip; financial limitations to affordable housing, health and dental care are barriers I face.

To help make the future more accessible, I belong to the Self Advocates of Nanaimo. We meet every month to talk about issues that are important to us. We made a film called "Food, Fun and Advocacy" that you can watch on YouTube.

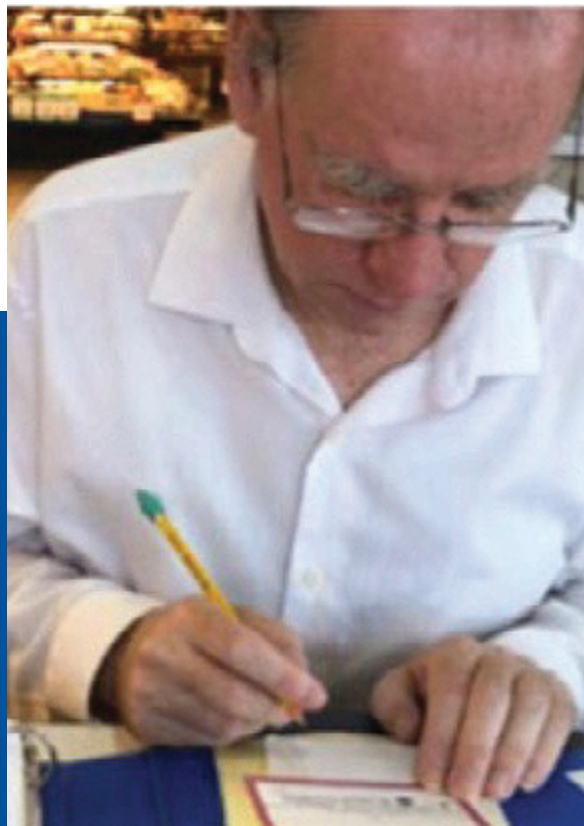
Patrick and fellow members of the Self Advocates of Nanaimo help to raise awareness around important issues including accessibility.

Nanaimo

We present our film and share our stories with organizations in the community. Last May, we presented a workshop at the Inclusion BC Conference in Victoria.

I have written letters to the university and conference centre with concerns for people with mobility issues. Both times I received an answer promising better accessibility.

I also filled out the B.C. government's survey on accessibility. If we all do small things to make a difference, our future will be more accessible.



"If we all do small things to make a difference, our future will be more accessible."

PATRICK PORTER

Self Advocacy Updates

Dignity and respect at the root of accessibility



In October, the annual Self Advocacy Leadership Retreat in Mission marked its 20th year of bringing self advocates together for three days of learning and connecting.

As part of the 2019 retreat, attendees created the message below about the importance of accessibility to submit for the government's public consultation (read more about this on page 4).

Information about the 2020 leadership retreat will be shared on SelfAdvocateNet.com later this year.

"Accessibility is about being treated with dignity and respect. People with diverse abilities are often bullied and made fun of when we go out to do the same things as everyone else. We want access to employment, to make our own money, and to be able to afford to live in our own home with the support we need. We want to play sports and live healthy.

This means there need to be teams and recreation programs that are inclusive and welcoming of everyone if they have a disability or not. It also means we have equal access to dentists and doctors and hospitals and that professionals are trained to work with people with diverse abilities. The waitlists are long, especially if you can't afford to buy your own medication or equipment.

Most of us rely on public transportation. Often the bus drives right by, or it's too crowded on the SkyTrain for wheelchairs, or to feel safe to travel alone.

There needs to be more places to sit down, more benches at bus stops, more spots to take a rest. Sidewalks and washrooms especially need to work for people who have wheelchairs or other mobility aids. We need to look out for one another, so we feel safe in the community. Safety phones and people watching out and asking if everything is okay would make a difference.

Accessible information is important so we know what's going on around us and what our options are. This means plain language and information we can access through video and not always by reading. Technology can make our lives better if someone takes the time to show us how it works.

Accessibility also means having role models to look up to so we are inspired to keep going, to work hard and to stand up and believe in ourselves."

Nanaimo welcomes annual BC People First conference

BC People First's 2020 conference, titled "Empowering Employment," takes place Wednesday, March 25 from 8:30am to 5:00pm at Beban Park Social Centre in Nanaimo.

Attendees will have the opportunity to learn skills and tools to advance their job searches, keep long-term employment, and stay job-ready for the future. There will be workshops, presentations, activities and prizes. Lunch and morning refreshments are included.

Learn more and register at: www.BCPeopleFirst.com.



Award recognizes self advocacy leadership

BC People First has opened nominations for its first ever **Self Advocate Leadership of the Year Award** until February 27, 2020. The winner will be announced at the "Empowering Employment" conference in March.

This award will celebrate an individual who has shown exceptional leadership and knowledge throughout 2019 in advocating for the rights of people labelled with an intellectual or developmental disability. This award showcases the importance of advocacy and encourages all self advocates to continue to lead and to be inspired.

The winner will receive a \$200 honorarium award (to assist in their advocacy efforts) and a plaque. The award decision committee, with delegates from different organizations in the self advocacy and community living field, will make their choice after reading all of the nominations.

Any self advocate labelled with an intellectual disability living in British Columbia is eligible for this award after being nominated by a peer, colleague or support worker.

Find more details and the nomination form at: www.BCPeopleFirst.com.

Access to technology means better connections

Self Advocate Net website manager Bryce Schaufelberger knows how important it is for people with diverse abilities to have the same access to technology as everyone else. That's why he's working with HOME Society in Abbotsford to transform old computers into useful ones to donate to those in need.

Whether you have an old computer to donate, or you need a computer, visit SAcomputers.ca or call 604-852-7888 for more information.



Remembering Jerry Laidlaw

In Memoriam



On November 6, 2019, we lost a dear friend, colleague and disability advocate, Jerry Laidlaw.

Jerry's leadership was far reaching and influenced the self advocacy and community living field in ways that have strengthened community for all of us. May we continue to learn from Jerry's story and keep asking questions about what is right and true, and worth fighting for.

The following quote was taken from a series of presentations Jerry gave throughout his career:

"My name is Jerry Laidlaw. I'm a self advocate from Mission. Inclusion means to be part of society like everybody else, no matter your diverse abilities. It means having the same rights as everybody else."

I am passionate about helping others to use their voice. I think people who have been labelled just want to be seen and heard for who they are. Remember: ask the person what they want, not just what their family wants. All of us are able in some diverse way."

For me, it takes time to get to know someone. It's important to really trust the people in your life and stay close to the people who love you. It's important not to blame yourself and to always do your best. Often you meet people when you aren't expecting it. If you are looking for more people in your life, the best thing to do is go out there and do the things that make you happy. You never know who you might meet and where life will take you."

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