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## New society aids disabled

**Langley residents are asked to help name a fledgling organization.**

Roxanne Hooper, Langley Advance: Monday, March 22, 2010

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"Pos-abilities" - as opposed to "disabilities" - are paramount in many people's thinking right now, with the Paralympic Games having just wrapped up in B.C. this weekend.

It's this focus on people and their abilities that Langley's Zosia Ettenberg hopes to achieve with a new non-profit organization she's in the midst of starting.

With the recent disbanding of Langley's Regional Disabled Persons Association, Ettenberg's hope is this new society will fill that void, and so much more.

Her vision is to create a Langley-specific organization that advocates for people with disabilities, and acts as a resource.

But its primary purpose, she said, will be to provide access to assistive devices, as well as maintenance or upgrades to equipment as needed.

"There are many people in the Langleys who require assistive devices and health and dental services and repairs to existing equipment not covered by MSP or other funding agencies," she said.

"Sometimes one is able to get an assistive device from one agency or other, but very rarely is there provision for upkeep and repairs," Ettenberg elaborated.

But while she's anxious to offer these services in Langley, the Fernridge-area resident sees this new society being built on a giving-back philosophy.

"The main idea is that each person who becomes a client would pay back in some way either with time or talent. That way dignity is maintained and we are providing a hand up, not a hand-out," she said.

The idea for a non-profit of this sort has been in the works for a few years, but Ettenberg said the first real step came last year at Langley's International Festival.

The festival inaugurated the Disability Pavilion, and introduced the concept of "Try on a Disability."

People were given a very brief experience of what it might be like to have a disability and given a better understanding of what so many neighbours, friends and coworkers living with disabilities face, she explained.

The plan is to resurrect the Disability Pavilion again at this year's festival, and use the venue as a way to entice support for the new, yet unnamed organization.

"I have given this idea a lot of thought over the past five years and have become convinced that this is something that Langley needs," Ettenberg told the Langley Advance.

"I have long advocated for the needs of people with disabilities (in the broadest sense of the word). I

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believe in inclusion and in gradually changing peoples' perception to seeing the person first and the disability last."

Ettenberg has overcome multiple obstacles set in her way, from childhood polio to breast cancer. She is a former physiotherapist and author who won the 2008 Courage to Come Back Award.

It's her ability to meld all her experiences in the world of health care, both as a patient and caregiver, that this 64-year-old woman feels prepare her for her new undertaking.

She has chosen to involve the community in the next big step towards creating a society, specifically naming the organization. She's holding a naming contest (see inset) first, then will be applying for society and charity status at the various levels of government.

In the meantime, Ettenberg and other supporters are turning their attentions to fundraising.

She envisions tapping into existing funding options, including grants from service clubs, foundations, and government programs that might be willing to fund devices and equipment for agencies rather than individuals.

Ettenberg's also thinking fundraisers.

"There will be many different fundraising efforts with part of the emphasis for people to understand more about the challenges that people face. For example, one of the first events we are planning will be a Blind Banquet in which one half of the attendees will be blindfolded for the entire event to experience what it would be like to have to live in that world," she said.

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#### NAME THE NON-PROFIT CONTEST

Zosia Ettenberg is in the midst of starting a new organization aimed at people with disabilities, and wants the community to help name it:

- Prize: a \$300-500 gift basket
- Requirements: That the name include "Langley"
- Entries: email kukimischief@gmail.com
- Deadline: Saturday, April 10

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