

Barbara Stewart: A legacy of volunteerism

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Barbara's volunteer passion:
Improving the lives of people with disabilities,
Especially those with Autism

Barbara's volunteer contributions: a summary

Personal background

- Barbara lived most of her life in Alberta.
- She has a Bachelor of Education from the University of Alberta,
- She worked as an itinerant teacher for
- Barbara for many years as an Educational Consultant for Visually impaired and multiply handicapped Students.
- Barbara married Dr. Neil Roberts in 1972.
- The first of three sons, Bryce, was born in 1976. He was followed in 1979 by Malcolm and in 1982 by Matthew.
- Bryce was diagnosed with autism at the age of 3 years.

Volunteer Commitments to Autism Organizations:

- Barbara joined the Edmonton Autism Society in 1980 or 1981 and committed herself to volunteer work carrying the banner of Autism for the next 25 years!
- She became active on the Edmonton Autism Society Board in the early 1980's, serving in a variety of executive positions; then as the President for 3 years (1988 to 1991).
- She worked as an Autism Society representative on various committees, subcommittees and task forces for many years.
- She also served on both the national and provincial Autism Society Boards, making a wide-reaching commitment to improving services to people with Autism of all ages.

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- Barbara was on the Board of Autism Society Canada beginning in 1992, for 6 years, for four years as a Board member, two as first Vice President, and filled the President role for a period of time.
- Barbara was the driving force behind reviving and then sustaining the Autism Society of Alberta, establishing the Society formally in December 1992. She served as President of ASA for seven critical, active years

This summary cannot begin to capture the variety of ways that Barbara Stewart worked for and served children with Autism and their families in the community through her skillful lobbying and representation of us on various government ministries task forces, subcommittees and advisory groups .

Nor can the list of activities n
or the hours of dedication capture the
way that Barbara did what she did for all of us.

This list cannot describe Barbara's keen intelligence and wisdom,
her warmth and encouraging spirit, her sense of style and
personal flair, her humor, grace and kindness.

That personal gift is reflected back to Barbara and her family in
appreciation from all of us, her grateful friends in the Autism
community.

Highlights of Barbara's service to people with Autism:

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Autism Society Canada

- Participated in development of “Charter of Rights and Responsibilities for people with Autism”.

Autism Society of Alberta

- Re-established the defunct provincial organization in 1992
- Lead project to develop and write “Abuse of Adults with Autism... How do we keep them safe?”, A document providing background as well as action plans to reduce the incidence of abuse (October, 1994)
- Assisted in developing Family & Social Services Protocol for Responding to allegations of abuse.
- Lobbied for Bill 211, (based on the work on the Abuse of Adults with Autism document) a Protocol was written which became part of the “Protection of Person’s in Care” Act passed in the Alberta Legislature in the winter of 1999.

Edmonton Autism Society

- Assisted in leading the “Momentum Project” (1995) 3-part project of Autism with the Edmonton Region.
 - A curriculum and training program for training staff working with adults with Autism
 - A Resource Manual of Services available.
 - A report on Adults with Autism in the Edmonton Region.
- Lead working groups & coordinated the project with other Board members & Social Services Ministry members

Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) Provincial Board

- Represented adults with Autism on the Person’s with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) board as member at large, from the inception of PDD, and for many years.
- She worked with persistence, dedication and determination to have people with “high-functioning” Autism or Asperger’s Syndrome to be provided with support they require living safely, well and with support in the community. This work we continue..

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Other important volunteer contributions:

- **City of Edmonton Advisory Board on Services to persons with Disabilities (four year term)**
 - Chair of Employment Sub committee
 - Member of Accessibility Subcommittee
 - Achieved City Policy on Accessibility for city owned and operated buildings

- **Children's Health center of Northern Alberta- Parent Advisory Council (four year term)**
 - Member of CHC mental Health Task Force

- **National Access Awareness Week (three year term)**
 - Chair of Edmonton Education Sub committee

- **Coalition for Inclusive Education (Edmonton)**

- **Special Education Advisory Committee (Alberta Education) member**

- **Alberta Disabilities Forum**

- **Barrier Free Design (Alberta Labor)- member**

Volunteer Service Awards:

- **1999- Silver Premier's Award**

- **2001- 30th Anniversary Autism Society of Edmonton Award- for outstanding long-term volunteer work**
 - **2000 – Autism Society of Alberta – Outstanding Volunteerism**