

# OPINION

The Okanagan Sunday, November 2, 2008



GARY NYLANDER/The Okanagan Sunday

Cheryl Elsworth, left, speech language pathologist, and Karina Frisque, program consultant in the autism program at the Central Okanagan Child Development Centre, sing the Head and Toe song for students on Friday.

## PARENTING

# Centres crucial to success

As if the realization that you now have a little one or new baby with a disability to look after is not enough of an adjustment, you now get to open up the vast world of support services and not get overwhelmed.

This can be overwhelming. In most cases, it is the first time experiencing the array of services that are a major part of many people within the disability world. It is important to understand when and why you need



ALLISON  
MCNEILL

parents was working, as we had the other children and family to look after and take her to all appointments, do her physio and speech therapy and so on. Amazingly, as our lives shifted into this new world, we felt saturated in, we learned that compared to some other challenges, she/we had/have it easy.

The COCDA also supports a host of other programs, from birth until kindergarten entry, including the infant development program, early

as, it is the first time experiencing the array of services that are a major part of many people within the disability world. It is important to understand when and why you need these services as well.

Your family doctor, specialist or social worker will likely suggest some areas that you may choose from as support and stimulation, once the diagnosis is made. This is all part of the journey to best support and help your little one and their family on the road.

Information is key and where you get it may vary. In our case, as parents of a daughter born in 1988 with Down syndrome, we did not have the great information provider of Internet access to research what options might be available. So, we did quite a bit of our own research.

Many kind people gave us books on Down syndrome and other resources to slowly bring into focus what our experience might be. It is wonderful that parents and families can use the Internet as a guide to a wealth of knowledge and an opportunity to hook up with many others (throughout the world) to share valuable information and experiences.

Some topics that may be of interest to parents include methods of stimulation, how to inspire speaking, sitting up and walking, how vitamins would affect our daughter's health and the ability to achieve small goals (or large) as they grow up.

We were lucky to be connected to several experienced professionals such as speech therapists, physiotherapists, teachers, natural and health-care professionals and more who gave us great free advice as soon as she came home.

The first support group, other than family and friends, we were connected to was what was then called the Okanagan Neurological Association. It is now the Central Okanagan Child Development Association. I should mention that our pediatrician, Dr. Cliff Henderson, and his wife were huge parts of starting COCDA with a group of like-minded individuals. We thank them

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Who's Challenge Is It?

### Coming events

— Wildcats mix and mingle is a fundraiser for ACD at Summerhill Estate winery Nov. 14, 7 p.m. Local music fine wine and cuisine and doorprizes all to benefit the Association of Children with Disabilities.

For \$50 tickets, call the winery at 250-764-8000.

— Cool Arts Christmas cards are also on sale at their website [www.coolarts.com](http://www.coolarts.com).

— The ALS Oct. 17 fundraiser raised more than \$50,000 going toward a new van for the young father/husband with two small children. Money will also be donated to another ALS victim in the Okanagan as a legacy. Thanks to all for your kindness and support

— A. McNeill

for their foresight, as there are now three centres in the Okanagan.

In addition to the Central Okanagan, the North Okanagan Neurological Association and Okanagan Similkameen Neurological Society child development centres are great additions. I emphasize the evolution from "neurological" to "child development," as a more welcoming way to describe these centres.

Early intervention is paramount in most cases to achieve early success. Reasonable goals must be set, along with understanding the options and accomplishments that can be made. Our daughter received speech and language therapy, physiotherapy, ongoing analysis through infant development consultations, and much more.

It was a good thing only one of her

challenges, she/we had/have it easy. The COCDA also supports a host of other programs, from birth until kindergarten entry, including the infant development program, early intensive behavioural intervention for children with autism, speech and language therapy, occupational and physiotherapy, supported child development and counselling.

Children can be referred to the centre by their parents, early childhood programs, by health nurses, family doctors, pediatricians and others. OSNA and NONA offer the same or similar programming.

Once referred to the centres, other referrals for specific needs can be done. There can be waiting lists to be aware of, but at this point in the intake, the centres' staff will create appropriate programs with specific needs and develop therapeutic goals.

The issue of waitlists is always frustrating for patients, families and clinicians, but the COCDA, OSNA and NONA work their magic as much as possible to ensure service is provided within a reasonable amount of time.

The contact information for the centres is:

— COCDA, Kelowna, 250-763-5100  
[www.info@cocda.com](http://www.info@cocda.com)

— NONA, Vernon, 250-549-1281  
[www.nona-cdc.com](http://www.nona-cdc.com)

— OSNA, Penticton, 250-492-0295  
[www.osna.org](http://www.osna.org)

Next month, we will feature some opportunities for you to volunteer for worthwhile organizations and offer some ideas for making others have a better Christmas. If you would like to share some information, comment on this column or provide some information on an upcoming event or fundraiser that benefits people with disabilities, we would like to hear from you. Please email me at [ali@misscommunicating.com](mailto:ali@misscommunicating.com)

**Allison McNeill is a mother to four, stepmother to two and married to their father. She is an advocate for equality for people with a disability and owns and operates a communications company in the Central Okanagan.**

## LETTER

# Off-shore oil moratorium should stay in place

Re. the Oct. 21 story in your newspaper, Ex-premiers look to offshore oil.

It is unfortunate that former interim premier turned industry consultant Dan Miller is once again advocating for industry to open up British Columbia's coast to oil rigs, tankers, pipelines and the risk of an Exxon Valdez-style catastrophe.

Every stage of the looming "energy corridor" scheme poses a threat to cetacean populations on the coast, starting with harmful noise impacts generated by seismic activity all the way through to the prospective spills, underwater noise and ship strikes associated with the transport of the recovered oil and gas.

Marine bird populations and wild salmon stocks will be made vulnerable, as well.

We do not need coastal oil exploration to satisfy domestic consumption in Canada and the oil sands crude from Alberta anticipated for shipping to Kitimat will be headed straight out of the country (likely to Asian markets) on VLCC's (Very Large Crude Carriers) approximately the size of the Exxon Valdez or larger.

The not-so-hidden agenda behind all the chatter about rescinding the moratoria in B.C. has everything to do with export markets.

For instance, Canada ranks as the No. 1 supplier of oil to the U.S., whose oil usage makes up 25 per cent of world oil consumption.

In addition, Miller is apparent about significantly contributing to a dangerous level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere once all those foreign rigs of Canadian oil burn up the planet.

Parenthetically, climate scientist of NASA has stated that we have considered the threshold for "manageable" concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

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