

Take a Hike



Newsletter of the British Columbia Mobility Opportunities Society

Fall 2011

A year of living generously

The British Columbia Mobility Opportunities Society (BCMOS) summer 2011 season is remarkable for a whole list of reasons.

The high-achieving season began with the launch of an adaptive kayaking program at Jericho Sailing Centre, and saw the popular BCMOS gliding program taking off at a new venue, Pemberton Soaring Centre, near Whistler. Things concluded on a high, with the August launch of a hiking centre at Pacific Spirit Regional Park (see Page 2).

In between BCMOS lead 121 hikes, to destinations between Green Timbers Urban Forest, Surrey and Blueberry Hill, Whistler. There were five kayak adventures and 15 gliding experiences.

There was also a very successful children's day in June, during which 13 young people aged 12 – 19 enjoyed TrailRider hikes along Jericho beach.

The TrailRider, a one-wheeled remote access wheelchair, remains available for year-round rental. It's just the *organized* hikes that have concluded; clients are still making their own adventures.

For more information phone Eric Molendyk on 604-688-6464 ext. 117 or visit www.bcmos.org.



Access all areas: Louisa Bridgeman goes off-road at Vancouver's Pacific Spirit Regional Park.

Escape from the urban jungle

BCMOS TrailRider hikes enrich the lives of people with disabilities in ways that are not immediately obvious.

Louisa Bridgeman, aged 34, of North Vancouver, took her first TrailRider hike with BCMOS this year at the recommendation of a GF Strong rec. therapist. She booked seven more outings before the summer was out.

"I was initially unsure how much fun it would be, but when I got there out in the trees it was amazing," she said. "It's not just being somewhere you would not normally get to, it's the people around you. You get to have interesting conversations with people."

"The connection you make with the people helping on the hikes is important, and they learn something about people with disabilities, too."

"The TrailRider shows the world that people with physical challenges and limitations do not just live in this box. People see me in a wheelchair and feel sorry for me – *don't*, there might be points in my life that I'm down, but don't feel sorry for me. Life happens."

Describing her TrailRider hikes as "emotional and mental therapy," she said the most memorable moment was crossing the swaying Lynn Canyon Suspension Bridge.

BCMOS: outdoor adventure for people with disabilities



BCMOS founder: Sam Sullivan at the launch.



Guests: Stephanie Cadieux at the mike.



Access all areas: The hiking centre.

Park and ride with new BCMOS hiking centre

British Columbia Mobility Opportunities Society officially opened its new facility in a popular Vancouver Park.

The accessible hiking centre, opened at Pacific Spirit Regional Park in late August, will serve as a base for BCMOS's accessible hikes through the surrounding trails. A maze of walkways through the park allow a variety of hikes, including trips down to the beach at Spanish Banks.

BCMOS offers TrailRider hikes during the summer months at Pacific Spirit Regional Park from Wednesday to Friday, and adventures further afield through Metro Vancouver on weekends. The centre, a 40ft long structure built from a former shipping container, is also used to store TrailRiders and as a centre for year-round rental of the unique access-all-areas wheelchair.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Surrey-Panorama MLA Stephanie Cadieux stated: "These programs are important to each and every member of the disability community, and to the broader community, because they remind people that access to each part of our community and life is a right. It's important for everyone to access the things that make our lives whole."

"Living in BC, and enjoying what BC has to offer in terms of environment is something no-one takes for granted, but people that do not have difficulty accessing it do not understand how important it is for those of us that do have difficulties accessing it."

Langley councillor Gail Martin, Chairwoman of the Metro Vancouver Parks Board praised "BCMOS's vision and commitment" to make parkland accessible.

"We have been supporters of BCMOS since they first launched their access to nature program. Programs operating from here have allowed access for hundreds of hikers with mobility problems.

"They provide opportunities for people with significant disabilities to access the outdoors which were previously unavailable."

She spoke of the park board's commitment to improve accessibility at all regional parks by upgrading trails, installing boardwalks and picnic areas.

Hiker Brad Jacobsen – who famously completed the notorious West Coast Trail by TrailRider – spoke of the importance of outdoors recreation to him before suffering a spinal cord injury 17 years ago.

"In 1994 I was at VGH wondering what I was going to do. I had been thinking of the places that were special to me, that made me want to live – the places that boost your spirit and make you positive about life."

However, a TrailRider hike to Garibaldi Highlands "opened up my eyes to what was possible." The hardest part is to "drop your ego" and rely on other people's help.

The new BCMOS facility replaces the group's previous pre-fabricated structure, put in place 17 years ago, which had reached the end of its useful life.

It was made possible by an Enabling Accessibility Fund grant from the federal Ministry of Human Resources and Skills Development, with Burnaby, BC company Disaster Recovery Services donating their skills and services to install the unit and the adaptations necessary for accessibility.



Launch party: Gathering together to open the new BCMOS hike centre.