



Champions Career Centre

"Connecting Employers and People with Disabilities"

Newsletter of Champions

Issue No. 9

Summer 2004

In Search of the Missing Link

Everyone who supports Champions Career Centre works hard to help meet the growing demand for "Ready, Willing and Able" job seekers by the Calgary business community.

My role and commitment as a Job Developer starts to really reap benefit when our business community recognizes the skills and abilities of job seekers who utilize our employment services in their search for the missing link - attachment to the Calgary workforce.

I want you to hear first-hand from a job-seeker about her experiences along the path to meeting her employment goal and finding that missing link. Here is Selena Puri's story: "Your Best Job-Searching Solution"

"A person thinks to him or herself: How will I ever find a job? How will I ever find a job perfect for me? There is a valuable resource available to disabled people who are job-seekers in Calgary. This resource is called Champions Career Centre. The steps to employment are quite simple. First, I went to an Orientation where I found out about the resources that were available to me. After determining my job search readiness, my Client Services Coordinator and I developed a plan to enhance my job search techniques in order to allow me to be more successful. Once I had solid job search skills and tools, I met with a Job Developer who was able to maintain the momentum of the process that I had developed through the services I had received to that point.

No matter who it is along the process, the employment counselor is ready, willing and able to help you assess your job search needs and 'help you help yourself' develop a job search action plan and strategy to meet your individual job search needs. This could be as simple as you using one of the many resources at the Centre, such as magazine articles, daily newspapers, computer/Internet lab, telephones to contact your choice of companies, photocopying of covering letters and resumes and faxing a copy to the company you are targeting. You may also need to meet with a Job Developer to access job leads, ask for suggestions on how to improve your covering letters and resumes, or to simply be your confidante when you are at that point of frustration and want to give up the job search entirely.

The bond you have with your Job Developer will allow you the confidence to be honest with yourself, as you are when airing your frustrations out with a friend, and sometimes that alone can give you some insight about ways in which to see past your daily struggles of just dealing with being a job seeker who also deals with various barriers to life.

During the implementation of your job search strategy, you and your Job Developer discuss such questions like: What type of company do you want to work for? What rate of pay do you want to earn? What size of company are you interested in working with? If you say that you have no specific preference to

any or all of the above questions and are flexible, then you are leaving yourself wide open to many different and rewarding employment opportunities that together with the Team at Champions you may be able to discover.

The benefits I experienced were that I found the motivation I required to continue what turned out to be a successful journey to finding permanent employment with a company where I feel I am able to utilize my skills and maximize my potential.

If you have ever found that you have been mistreated or unfairly let go from a job, such as I have in my past, then your Champions employment counselor is the perfect person to help you help yourself get right back up again, so that you can continue the search once again."

If your organization is looking for the individual who is "Ready, Willing and Able" and who has the skills and abilities to fill your missing link, please do not hesitate to contact me at Champions Career Centre.

Kelly J. Callison Nadeau – Job Developer

knadeau@championscareercentre.org

Refer to our website for additional information:

www.championscareercentre.org.



President's Message



Real and Emerging Issues of Governance in a Not-for-Profit Company

Report from Annual General Meeting June 23, 2004

The past year presented some interesting challenges

and perspectives with respect to the governance of Champions Career Centre Limited. These challenges and perspectives arose in part from heightened awareness around the world with respect to governance issues arising from such events as the ENRON, TYCO, WORLDCOM, HOLLINGER, and most recently, NORTEL scandals. I believe they have also arisen in part from the increasing maturity and sophistication of the human service sector with respect to governance in general, and with the nature and operation of Champions Career Centre in particular. I think that this heightened awareness has been especially so on the part of the Board of Directors of Champions who have taken their fiduciary responsibilities seriously, and on the part of Champions shareholders who seem to have been asking themselves what rights, benefits and, perhaps to a lesser degree, what responsibilities they have as shareholders.

To put some perspective on these issues, it is important to note that while the incorporation of not-for-profit organizations under the Alberta Companies Act is, in itself, not unusual, this mode of incorporation is relatively poorly understood in an environment in which incorporation under the Societies Act is the norm for the sector. Furthermore, to complicate matters the interests of shareholders in a not-for-profit company are different than they are in a for-profit company.

Specifically, the primary interests of shareholders in for-profit companies are to accrue benefits (primarily financial) to those shareholders. By definition, this cannot be the case for shareholders in not-for-profit companies. This distinction is further reinforced by the fact that in the case of Champions Career Centre Limited, it has status as a charitable organization under Canada Revenue Agency. As such, significant benefits cannot flow to shareholders or Directors without risking the charitable status of the organization.

This context then brings me to my brief review of the governance issues both dealt with and, in some cases, continuing to face Champions.

First, in an effort to regulate its own behaviour during the last year the Board adopted a Code of Conduct governing such

areas as integrity; loyalty; Board-Staff relations; external communications; and conflict of interest – such as self-dealing, use of information for personal advantage, and employment. As part of this Code mechanisms for the censure and suspension of non-compliant Board members were also put in place.

Secondly, during the last year the organization, and in particular the operational staff, have had to deal with a variety of implicit and explicit representations from some Shareholders for Champions to either increase the service volumes directed to those Shareholders or to modify the nature of services requested by Champions to suit the operational preferences of the Shareholder. Such representations clearly challenge not only the statutory and ethical obligations of Champions, but its very conceptual underpinnings. That is, any requests by Shareholders for special contractual and business relationships with Champions which potentially advance the competitive advantage of those Shareholders present significant challenges to Champions in order for it to meet the standards of independence and compliance with requirements as a charitable organization.

Yet interestingly, some of these same and other Shareholders have also requested clarification regarding Champions plans to advance its fund raising initiatives. Therefore, when placed side by side, (that is, Shareholders requesting increased business, and encouraging increased fund raising revenues), these concurrent requests begin to take on the appearance of financially-related self-interest on the part of Shareholders. The resolve of this “conflict” is perhaps precisely as the Board has proposed in its May 2003 Strategic Planning process – the increase of service providers. Additionally, its resolve may also lie in part in the diversification of Board (and Governance) representation outside of the service provider and Shareholder realm to include a larger number of truly independent Directors. If the Shareholders concur with this assessment, they will be able to confirm it through the appropriate selection of Directors for the forthcoming year.

Yet another challenge faced by Champions at the governance level during the past year has been to balance the obligations of the organization to openly and fully disclose its use of funds – especially public funds – against the legal and statutory requirements to protect the rights of its business partners and its clients. For example, while it is reasonable to expect that Champions should share on an open and unrestricted basis any information that relates to with whom and in what amounts “sub-contracted” services have been

Government Commitment

The Champions Career Centre project is made possible by funding through **Alberta Human Resources and Employment and the Government of Canada**. Recognizing the need for a centralized ‘job bank’ for individuals with disabilities, Alberta Human Resources and Employment (AHRE) awarded Champions with a two-year contract to develop and provide employment services for Albertans with disabilities. This funding enabled Champions to quickly establish an array of employment, training and placement services for its clients. AHRE addresses workplace issues including training, health and safety, and employment support and services. For information about AHRE, visit the web site at www.gov.ab.ca/hre.

Corporate Commitment

TransAlta Corporation is Canada's largest non-regulated electric generation and marketing company, with more than \$7 billion in assets and 9,000 megawatts of capacity in operation or under construction. As one of North America's lowest cost operators, their growth is focused on developing coal and gas fired generation in Canada, the United States and Mexico. For more information about TransAlta and career opportunities, visit their web site at www.transalta.com.

RBC Royal Bank is one of Canada's premier financial services institutions serving over 12 million individuals and business customers worldwide. With assets of \$362 billion, the organization employs 57,500 full time employees. The company values diversity in the workplace and is committed to employment equity. About 30 percent of all employees work in some form of flexible work arrangement, the highest proportion of any company in Canada. For more information about RBC Royal Bank and career opportunities, visit their web site at www.rbc.com.

TransCanada Pipelines Limited is a leading North American energy company, focused on natural gas transmission and power services. Its network of about 38,000 kilometres (23,600 miles) of pipeline transports the majority of western Canada's natural gas production to the fastest growing markets in Canada and the United States. Headquartered in Calgary, Alberta, TransCanada owns, controls, or has under construction about 2,550 megawatts of power - enough to meet the needs of more than two million average households. For more information about TransCanada and career opportunities, visit their web site at www.transcanada.com

President's Message Cont'd

let, the release of this information may potentially harm the business interests of the sub-contracted entity by way of providing information about the nature and extent of services provided by that organization. The release of unrestricted information could also result in the provision information about individual clients or groups of clients – which would in turn be a violation of existing privacy legislation. In an effort to judicially balance these seemingly competing obligations, the Champions Board has thus far proceeded in a cautious manner, but will undoubtedly be turning to both its Shareholders and legal counsel for further advice and direction.

Also of challenge to individual Board members in fulfillment of their governance duties during the last year has been the demand of time that they have faced. In many respects Champions Career Centre is still in its infancy with respect to many governance issues. As with most developmental processes, maturity and solidification of important building blocks come only with the allocation of significant time commitments to the developmental work required. However, each Board member this past year has had to carry their own full-time work obligations in their respective careers, manage family obligations, etc. while devoting time to the governance work of Champions. While I believe each of us wishes he or she could have devoted more time to advancing the necessary requirements, and fully meeting all Shareholder and other constituent demands, the unfortunate reality is that we have fallen short even in our own eyes. But could we have done differently? Regretfully, I think not. However, in spite of our own regrets at not accomplishing everything that we had set for ourselves, we believe that we have dealt with the essential priorities. And we have kept our gaze forward to the forthcoming year and years. As an initial step in this direction we have carefully examined our needs from a governance perspective and have concluded that now is the time to add breadth and depth to the Board table. With this asset and resource in hand we are confident that both the essential governance priorities or the organization will be met, and that this work will be accomplished without it being a burden or liability to any individual Board member, their career, business, or family.

In closing, on behalf of the Board of Directors I would like to thank the following people for their significant efforts during the past year on behalf of Champions and the individuals it serves.

First, a special thank you to Alister Cowan who has served as our Treasurer for the last year and a half. Alister has been an invaluable resource to the organization and Board in not only a financial capacity, but also as someone whose insights and general perspectives on a wide range of governance topics is unsurpassed. We will greatly miss Alister as he moves on to new responsibilities.

Secondly, the Board expresses their sincere thanks and appreciation to our Executive Director Dr. Bob Gall whose leadership and fortitude during the last year in the face of numerous challenges is a beacon for all of us. Where lesser individuals might have taken the easy road to not stay committed to and to work toward realizing a vision that comes from decades of service in the human services sector, Dr. Gall has remained resolute and steadfast. We thank him for unwavering efforts.

Thirdly, to all the staff at Champions I extend thanks and appreciation on behalf of the Board. Your tasks are not easy and the path is not always clear. But you too have committed yourselves to the benefit of individuals with disabilities in our community. Your efforts are deeply appreciated.

Fourthly, to all our community partners – whether they be corporate, donor, service provider – we thank you on behalf of persons with disabilities that you have assisted in making their dreams for meaningful engagement in careers and the world of work become a reality.

And last but not least I would like to thank my fellow Board members who have always been focused to the job at hand and have always given their best and all in helping to move the concept of Champions forward. We unreservedly believe that the concept and model of Champions is the right one and recommend to the Shareholders support for its ongoing viability.

With thanks as your President for 2003-2004,
Gerrit Groeneweg, Ph.D., C.Psych.

From the Desk of the Executive Director



The contents of this Newsletter report represents a very condensed version of the detailed report delivered to the AGM held June 23, 2004. Only a few of the more important developments are shared below.

Since CCC opened its doors to clients in late 2000, almost 6000 individuals have explored our services. Of these 1134 clients enrolled for job search assistance in collaboration with our internal staff support system and the staff members employed by Service Provider agencies. Of interest are the disability classifications in our client pool as follows: Physical (36%), Intellectual/Cognitive (21%), Mental Health (25%); Hearing (13%), and Visual (5%). Since the past AGM held June 23, 2003 to date the agency has contracted with service providers for 85 workshops involving 641 clients, while a total of 667 individual services were also provided.

The original mandate of the agency was reviewed, with comments about fragmentation of employment and training resources for Albertans with disabilities, and the agency's challenge to create an effective and innovative, tri-sector partnership involving profit and non-profit disability organizations, government agencies and major Alberta companies. The present CCC legal status was reviewed and included Alberta Companies Act Certificate of Incorporation, the CCRA Registered Charitable Organization and the Asset Transfer Agreement between the CCC Board and CPA(A).

A review of the partnership between the Operations and Board governance was presented, with identification of the Board's role with the Shareholder community (discussed in the Chair's report in this newsletter).

From the Desk of the Executive Director Cont'd



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Staff achievements in fulfilling contractual obligations to the new AHRE contract # 09511591 were identified, with special focus on the stability we have been able to achieve in staffing the agency and improving client activity monitoring reports. The Contract Management Team has developed a sophisticated contract performance monitoring document (Projected Monthly Targets PMT Analysis) which enables administration to make immediate adjustments to client services. Contractual obligations are systematically reviewed by AHRE officials through a process of regular "on-site monitoring" activities which include client file reviews, staff and client interviews, and administrative process decision reviews.

The key differences between the previous three year contract (19903/A- July, 2000 to February 2004) to that of the new contract (August 2003 to February 2006) were outlined. Client services under Contract #09511591 involves the completion of Workability Assessments (900, which is 100% of 900 active clients,) while Action Plans are to be completed for 800 clients or 89% of active clients. Employment Outcomes in the new Contract at both the three-month and six month levels were set at 60% (540/900).

Support for the extension of technology enhancements to clients was achieved through the acquisition of adaptive technical equipment and software in our client laboratory made available by more effectively utilizing the original AHRE start-up grant, and a special \$75,000 grant from TransCanada Pipelines.

We renegotiated a more cost-effective lease with Aspen Property Management when the previous lease terminated in late 2003 which involved space expansion as well as elevator upgrading with touch and auditory signals to better assist clients with visual challenges.

New financial policies have been generated in response to the appointment of Alister Cowan as Board Treasurer. With his extensive expertise guiding new incentives, CCC has now installed effective audit and financial accountability processes. The 2004 Audit Process was completed with the appointment of a new Audit firm. Toward that end, meetings were held with representatives of the firm Collins Barrow starting in January leading to a successful final audit.

Client Advisory Committee members (Barry Lindemann, Glenn Murphy, and Annae Jones) met on four occasions to review the activities of

the staff. Members have volunteered to contact a representative sample of our clients to obtain a qualitative evaluation of our services.

Champions is contractually obligated to monitor client progress and service quality when agencies accept client referrals. Meetings of the Service Provider community members have been held on two occasions. Considerable understandings were achieved regarding differing expectations and obligations. All sub-contracted services continue to be monitored on the basis of two primary principles: client freedom of choice, and merit based on proven agency competency in dealing with client needs. Revised agreements have been developed and await legal review to better reflect the renewed legal relationship which exists when contracts are approved for 1:1 and workshop services for the clients. To address perceived inequities among the service provider agencies, senior staff continues to implement revised procedures for allocating contract opportunities while evaluating service quality.

As with other agencies in this sector, CCC has been dealing with challenges of staff organization and motivation under conditions of increasing accountability pressures from government, the community, and clients generally. We have significantly improved the management and supervision process to ensure client service remains at high levels. Since January 2004 all staff have undertaken a full review of both individual and unit assignments. This time-consuming but very important process has clarified the rights and responsibilities of all staff members as they fulfill significant obligations to clients.

Continual refinement of CCC internal and external communication systems such as quarterly newsletters and the website (www.championscareercentre.org) will take place. Associated with this is the development of a support system to future Board-generated communications to the Shareholder community.

In closing this article, we again express the most sincere thanks to our clients, almost 6000 of which have passed through our doors. Without them, and their pressing needs which challenge us to demonstrate our best professional and interpersonal effort, the achievements which Champions has gained would not have been as impressive.

Robert Gall, Ph.D., C.Psych.

Nexen Inc. (formerly Canadian Occidental Petroleum Ltd.) is a global energy and chemicals company with production in Canada, the United States, Yemen, Nigeria and Latin America. Nexen conducts its business in an honest, ethical manner and adheres to the highest standards of integrity when dealing with stakeholders and the communities where they operate. Headquartered in Calgary, Nexen employs 2,000 people in its operations around the world. Nexen is an employer of choice through its diverse business unit structure, commitment to the use of leading edge technology, small company environment and global career opportunities. For more information about Nexen Inc. and career opportunities, visit their web site at www.nexeninc.com.

Shell Canada Limited is one of the largest integrated petroleum companies in Canada. The company is a major producer of natural gas, natural gas liquids and bitumen, and the country's largest producer of sulfur. Shell Canada is also a leading manufacturer, distributor, and marketer of refined petroleum products. Shell Canada provides a select number of scholarships for Canadian students with disabilities. For more information about Shell Canada and employment opportunities, visit their web site at www.shell.ca.

BP Canada Energy is one of Canada's top producers of natural gas and derivatives, in addition to being Canada's largest sulfur producer. BP is rated as the number one oil company in terms of environmental performance. For more information about BP Canada and career opportunities visit their web site at www.bp.com.

Foundation Commitment

The Kahanoff Foundation is a private Canadian foundation active in Canada and Israel. The foundation was established in 1979 from the estate of Sydney Kahanoff, a Calgary oilman. Today its assets are in excess of \$100 million, making it one of the largest foundations in Canada. Located in Calgary, the foundation funds traditional and innovative charitable programs in the areas of health, education, culture, social services, philanthropy, community development and research. For more information about The Kahanoff Foundation, visit their web site at www.kahanoff.com.

The Experience of a Lifetime - A Client Story

There is no stress greater in life than losing a job, especially if that job was one you worked at for years and then suddenly found one day that it was gone. I went through this stress.

Previously, I went to the Canadian Paralegic Association, who told me to contact Champions Career Centre, an organization which helps disabled people get the training they need to become successful at job searching, and aid in finding employment. I wasted no time in making the call.

After the initial sign up process and submission of my resume and references, I was set up to meet with a Client Services Coordinator.

The Coordinator took the time to understand what direction I wanted to go, what I did in the past, and any disabilities that pose barriers to obtaining a full-time job. We also talked about how my job searches were going previous to signing up with Champions, what I felt comfortable doing, and what

I would like to improve on. It was decided that I should take an Interview Skills course because I was not as comfortable as I should be during an interview. Also, I wanted to take a Job Search Techniques course just in case there was a medium that I overlooked.

At these courses, I met a lot of interesting people and people I could relate to. I learned a great deal of things I was doing right and things I was doing wrong, even learning how to make positives out of negatives just by simply wording my faults differently.

After taking those two courses, I then met with a Job Developer who again took the time to understand what I was trying to achieve in my job search. We discussed my resume and cover letter and what I should be doing instead of what I was doing. He suggested that since I have a background in Web Design and Internet Marketing, I should start up my own personal web site as my online resume, which I did.

He then gave me some names of people to contact, and suggested businesses that I should be seeking out to find the “head guy”, so that I could talk to them and send them my resume.

After sending out a few resumes, it was not long before I got a call for a phone interview, which because of my Interview Skills course, I handled perfectly. Soon after, I got a call for a second interview; again, smooth as butter. Finally, one last call, the call to say that I was hired as a full-time permanent Customer Service Officer at a bank.

Champions Career Centre gives disabled people a chance to be an equal. Knowing that there are people who are specialized and always willing to fight for us, and give us an edge in job search, makes being disabled not a downfall, but an advantage.

Curtis Brown

A Note about Disability Related Employment Supports (DRES)

The Province of Alberta is working with the Government of Canada to provide employment support programs and services. These benefits and measures are funded in part by the Government of Canada.

The Disability Related Employment Supports (DRES) program is offered to people with disabilities throughout Alberta to help in addressing barriers to employment. Job search, workplace or educational supports can be provided.

To be eligible, you must be an Alberta resident and have a diagnosed

permanent or long-term disability that creates a barrier to employment. You will be assisted to develop an action plan that will lead to gainful and competitive employment or maintain your current employment position.

Examples of supports can include: assistive technology such as specialized software, workplace modifications, or sign language interpreters.

Champions' Client Services Coordinators act as an access point to the DRES program and assess your eligibility through an in-person interview. Client Services Coordinators


assist in the completion of the action plan, and required paperwork for submission to Alberta Human Resources and Employment.

The in-person interview is essential to clearly identify your goal and employment-related issues and barriers.

For more information about the DRES program, visit the Alberta Human Resources and Employment website at: www.gov.ab.ca/hre/dres or contact the Intake Coordinator at Champions.

Website Accessibility

Earlier this summer, Champions launched a new website that now conforms to W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 1.0.

Throughout the site you will notice the  logo that appears on each page. This logo certifies that the site has been designed so users with disabilities can more easily use the web pages.


For example, access to the information will be easier for any people who use web browsers that read text out loud using a speech synthesizer. As another example, people who are not using a mouse can instead use the Access Keys and "NANA" (*see below) to navigate the site's web pages.

Designing a page to fully meet accessibility guidelines has meant that the site may not be as 'flashy' as some sites, but this is something we are more than willing to accept if it means that more people can view material that may assist them in some way.

For more information on web content accessibility guidelines, please see the W3C Web Accessibility Initiative (www.w3.org/WAI). For more information on creating web sites that are accessible, please visit AccessEnabled.Net (www.accessenabled.net), the developers of the Champions' web site.

*NANA and Access Keys

Developed by AccessEnabled.Net (www.accessenabled.net), the Net Accessibility Navigation Architecture (NANA) is a standardized set of Access Keys recommended for use across all web sites in order to make browsing of web pages easier for all users. Web sites supporting

NANA display the NANA logo . To learn more about the history of NANA, please visit the AccessEnabled.Net web site.

Most browsers support jumping to specific links by typing keys defined on the web site. On Windows systems, you can press the "Alt" key plus an access key; on Macintosh systems, you can press the "Control" key plus an access key (depending on which browser you use). the Champions' web site, Access Keys are denoted by "(alt-'access key')" following a hyperlink. Wherever "alt" appears on the website, Macintosh users need to substitute the appropriate key for their system.

The standard "NANA" access key combinations are described in detail at: www.championscareercentre.org/access_keys.html.

Champions Career Centre is proud of its leadership role in accessibility issues.

New Board Member Betty-Ann Blackwell

The Board of Directors is pleased to welcome Betty-Ann Blackwell as a Member at Large.

Betty-Ann, Disability Management Consultant and Canadian Certified Rehabilitation Counsellor, has 18 years of expertise in vocational rehabilitation and disability case management. She works with a wide range of individuals with cross disabilities, including: brain injury, spinal cord injury, soft tissue injury, chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia and other pain syndromes, in addition to cardiac, orthopaedic, psychiatric and other mental health conditions. She is a Registered Rehabilitation Professional and long-standing member with the Canadian Association of Rehabilitation Professionals. At various times she has served on the Board of Directors at the provincial level in Ontario and Alberta.

Her primary focus has been on the evaluation and development/implementation of appropriate community-based vocational rehabilitation plans and return-to-work plans, in collaboration with the individual, treating physicians and specialists,



employers, insurers and where applicable, lawyers. Services include employer education and marketing, job development and placement, and return to work initiatives through the application of solid assessment, adjustment counselling, psychosocial and career counselling, and case management skills.

Betty-Ann has training in and offers Workplace Facilitation services to provide practical intervention in those instances where the primary barrier to work reintegration is non-medical and relates to a workplace issue or conflict.

Betty-Ann has lived in Calgary since 1996 when she opened B.A. Blackwell-Disability Management Services. Her present area of specialization is in working at the community level with complex long-term disability and workers' compensation rehabilitation files throughout Alberta. She also currently serves on the editorial committee of the Rehab Review, a national quarterly publication of the Canadian Association of Rehabilitation Professionals.


**Champions
Career Centre**

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for an electronic or

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