Welcome to Disability Services

Disability Services is located in Building 200 on the Nanaimo Campus. The Disability Services team is pleased to provide services to students, staff and faculty at Vancouver Island University.

This newsletter is designed to give you some of the information that you need to make your experience at Vancouver Island University welcoming and adaptable to your educational needs. In this tenth edition, you can find information about services available on campus, community programs, and exciting events that have taken place on campus.

If you have any questions or suggestions for future newsletters, please contact Disability Services by email: disabilityservices@viu.ca.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Vancouver Island University played host to its fifth annual Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 1st. A huge thank you to Disability Access Specialist Denise Hook for all her work to ensure this event was a huge success! You can read more about the International Day on page 8.
Welcome to the Disability Services Team

With the departure of coordinator Debra Hagen in Spring 2016 the Disability Services Team, Nanaimo Campus, welcomed their newest team member Luke Richards.

Having previously spent 10 years working at the University of Victoria as a member of the faculty, and also working on his PhD, the opportunity to work with Disability Services was the number one reason to make the move to Nanaimo. Being able to raise his young family in the area was the perfect situation for Richards, who notes that the beaches are great.

The university, offers a “large diverse catalogue of programs. There is something for everyone” Richards notes. Whether you are a science major studying fisheries or working on the heavy equipment operator course, there is something for people of all abilities at Vancouver Island University.

One piece of advice that Richards would offer to all existing students at VIU and also those students who are coming in, is to “take advantage of all the things offered - clubs, organizations and services.”

Welcome to VIU Luke!
**Missing Something?**

If you’ve misplaced any items recently consider checking the Lost and Found, located in Building 315, Room 110.

Found items can be turned in at the Cafeteria, the Library Loans Desk or directly to Security in Building 315 Room 110.

If checking the Lost and Found for your items, please note that items often do not make it there until the end of the week, so you may need to wait a few days to claim them.

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**Counselling Services on Campus**

**A Place To Turn When You Need Help**

**Professional, Safe and Confidential**

Counselling Services offers free, confidential and professional support to enrolled VIU students.

Counsellors collaborate with students in a compassionate setting to clarify concerns, establish goals and explore resources for well-being. We offer a variety of services which can assist in the management of personal challenges allowing students to have the best university experience possible.

To set up an appointment, drop by the Health & Wellness Centre on the 3rd floor of Building 200 or call 250 740-6416 from 8:30-4:00 pm.

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**Services for Aboriginal Students**

Located in Shq’apthut— A Gathering Place, the Services for Aboriginal Students Team is available to support Aboriginal students in making a successful transition to Vancouver Island University and to assist students to succeed in their academic endeavours by providing direct services and appropriate referrals.

Staff are available to listen and support students with academic or personal concerns and promote academic, cultural, recreational and social activities in partnership with Aboriginal Students.

Celebration feasts, potlucks and community events are supported by Services for Aboriginal students.

Location: Building 170.
Tel: 250-740-6510. Fax: 250-740-6385 Email: sas@viu.ca

**Phone, email or drop by to make an appointment.**

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We are not our diagnoses. We are beings, living, full of life and adventure. Our adventures are simply played on a smaller field.

- Ann Wilkinson
Special Olympics BC

Special Olympics BC gives athletes of all abilities the opportunity to compete in sport.

Did you know that Special Olympics BC is always looking for volunteers to help coach or work behind the scenes?

The Nanaimo Chapter of Special Olympics BC gives athletes the opportunity to stay active in alpine skiing, basketball, bocce-ball, 5 and 10 pin bowling, club fit, curling, figure skating, floor hockey, fundamentals, golf, rhythmic gymnastics, soccer, softball, swimming and track and field.

Contact Sylvia Taylor Local Coordinator Tel 250-758-0630 or by email at sylvia-miller@shaw.ca to volunteer today!

Radio (2003) — Movie

Released in 2003 Radio stars Cuba Gooding Junior and Ed Harris. Cuba Gooding plays Radio, a developmentally challenged African-American male, who loves football more than anything. Through his unconventional relationship with Coach Jones (Ed Harris), Radio becomes a fixture on the football field and in the classroom.

This movie brings you through the ups and the downs of a high school football coach as he struggles to stand up for what he believes in, Radio having a chance, fighting against a town that is fighting to keep things the way they always have been.

Soul Surfer (2011) - Movie

When thirteen year old Bethany Hamilton was attacked by a 14 foot long tiger head shark on October 31, 2003, it could have spelled the end of her professional surfing career. Soul Surfer follows Bethany’s journey as she overcomes her injury and regains her position at the top of the professional surfing world.

Starring Anna Sophia Robb as Bethany, Soul Surfer is based on Bethany’s autobiography, Soul Surfer: A True Story of Faith, Family, and Fighting to Get Back on the Board.

Soul Surfer gives a glimpse into the before, and after life of Bethany, bringing home the determination and support that saw her return to the water only a month after the shark attack.
Tapping
Did you know that blind swimmers use tappers to help them know when to time their turns in the pool?

A tapper uses a pole with a buoy on the end to tap swimmers as they near the end of the pool.

Tapping is good exercise as they walk back and forth along the edge of the pool. Good physical fitness is important for anyone who is a tapper as they may walk 3.5 km to 5 km or more during a single session.

Amber Thomas is currently looking for tappers to help with her training for the next Paralympic games. This is a volunteer position, that can transition to a paid position as the Olympics near, and will require travelling within Canada the United States.

Introducing Amber Thomas

On December 6, 2016, I had the opportunity to sit down with Amber Thomas and her guide dog Bear, to learn more about her experiences at Vancouver Island University, Disability Services, and as a competitive swimmer.

**Jaime: Hi Amber, what can you tell me about your program?**

Amber: I am studying computer science.

**Jaime: When will you be done your degree?**

Amber: Two and a half years.

**Jaime: When you’re done your program at Vancouver Island University what are your plans?**

Amber: I am focusing on app design and web accessibility. Working on both new apps and webpages, but also on improving existing pages and applications.

**Jaime: How has Disability Services helped you achieve your goals?**

Amber: A lot of brailling and also finding difference resources. Disability Services has also worked with stepping in and giving extra help when needed and as a buffer zone for my professors. They have also helped out with exam accommodations.

**Jaime: What is one piece of advice that you would give to incoming students?**

Amber: It might sound cliché, but communication is important, especially when you have a disability. You need to communicate to teachers and classmates about what works and what doesn’t, what you have tried. Another thing is to be open to suggestions. You might find a completely new way to do something that you hadn’t thought of before.

**What is your favourite thing about attending Vancouver Island University?**

Amber: The built-in fitness program with all the stairs! The atmosphere is friendly, and the campus is nicely spaced out which makes navigating easier. They try to be accessible, even with all the stairs, and will do their best to help and ensure you get from point A to point B.

**Jaime: How long have you been swimming for?**

Amber: Since I was five. I took the last four years off when I went into retirement, but now I am coming back.

**Jaime: You mentioned that you retired from swimming. What guided your decision to start up again?**

Amber: I am ready to get further ahead than I was before. I was burnt out before, but now I’m in a better place.
Introducing Amber Thomas—Continued

Jaime: I did some research before this interview and found out that you were the first blind woman to relay swim the English Channel. What was it like swimming across the Channel?
Amber: It was a really fun experience. My coach and teammates nicknamed me Polar Bear because I don’t get cold. Even coming out of the channel, it was 16 degrees and I was fine. My coach, Marianne Alvarez, was easy going, and turned it into a positive experience.

Jaime: Having the short film, Fearless, made about you must have been exciting. What was the experience like?
Amber: My coach Marianne knew the guys who made the film. They wanted more and more footage, and to show difference aspects of my life. They didn’t want to just show the surface, they wanted to show a broader viewpoint.

Jaime: What benefits have swimming given you?
Amber: Swimming has made my day to day strength better. My swimming brain helps with stress and emotional turmoil, helping me stay calm in stressful situations.

Jaime: Do you have any advice for other athletes following their dreams?
Amber: Learn who you are as an athlete. It took me a long time to learn what works for me may be different than what works for others. I had to learn to stand up for myself with my coaches to say, “No this isn’t working, we need to try something else.”

Jaime: How important is having passion in life?
Amber: Really important, you need to have drive to enjoy life. A life without passion is like getting stuck in a job just to pay the bills. Life is about more than that.

I would like to thank Amber for taking the time to speak with me, and for sharing both her academic and personal journey for this article.

Fearless Movie
Amber Thomas’ amazing journey across the English Channel was documented in the short film, Fearless, produced by the Black Rhino Creative.

As a nine-year child Amber was diagnosed with brain cancer which resulted in the loss of her vision. Despite losing her vision, Amber continued forward with her passion for swimming and has competed in the Para-Olympic games, winning bronze and silver in 2012 in London.

At 10 minutes in length, Fearless gives viewers the opportunity to learn more about Amber and her swimming journey.

Fearless can be viewed here: http://www.storyhive.com/project/

“….What I learned was that these athletes were not disabled, they were superabled. The Olympics is where heroes are made. The Paralympics is where heroes come.”

- Joey Reiman
Making Art Accessible

Mary Stasiuk, Disability Services Access Specialist, worked with the Art Department Fall 2016 to acquire an accessible art easel. The addition of the accessible art easel to the art program is a key component in ensuring that art is accessible for everyone who takes classes at Vancouver Island University.

“Kudos to the Art Department for purchasing an accessible easel and helping to remove barriers so that Art students can self-actualize their talents!”

- Mary Stasiuk

Focus on Technology—Be My Eyes

For people who are blind, or those with low vision, it can difficult to complete tasks that many people take for granted, like reading the best before date on a jug of milk or distinguishing between chamomile and orange pekoe tea. The Be My Eyes App for Apple devices is hoping to change that.

Be My Eyes allows helpers to sign up and help those with vision loss by being their eyes. When someone needs help, a message is sent out. Helpers receive the signal and are connected directly to the person needing assistance.

Having been recognized by Popular Science in 2015 for being one of the top applications of the year as well as the best social entrepreneur startup by the Nordic Start-Up Awards in 2015, Be My Eyes has demonstrated the value of coming together as a community for the greater good.

Availability: currently available on Apple iOS system only
Coming Soon: Google Play version
Cost: FREE

Did you know? With over 700 registered students Disability Services helped accommodate 1650 exams in the 2015/16 school year!

Image source: http://www.bemyeyes.org/
Spotlight on Sylvia Plath—Author/Poet

Sylvia Plath (October 27, 1932 – February 11, 1963) was an American born author and poet who battled depression for much of her adult life. Best known for her autobiographical poetry, Plath opened the doors to reading about mental illness and depression.

Her book The Bell Jar, is semi-autobiographical and based on her experience being institutionalized at McLean Hospital for clinical depression. McLean Hospital was also the scene of the movie, *Girl Interrupted*.

Sylvia was born in Massachusetts in 1932 and excelled at writing from a young age, publishing her first poem at the age of eight in the Boston Herald.

“It's my experience that people are a lot more sympathetic if they can see you hurting, and for the millionth time in my life I wish for measles or smallpox or some other easily understood disease just to make it easier on me and also on them.”

— Jennifer Niven, All the Bright Places

International Day of Persons with Disabilities

The fifth annual Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 1, 2016 was a huge success. Twenty-two groups came out to share knowledge about the services which are available in town to persons with disabilities. This year’s event was well attended by staff and students of the university, and also brought in visitors from around the community. Leonard Krog, MLA, was one of the visitors to the event, spending time visiting each community partner display.

The Nanaimo Nitro Soccer team showcased their abilities in a game of scrimmage which was a huge hit for everyone in attendance.

Disability Services staff were on hand throughout the day to provide information to students regarding the various programs that are available to help make sure that their experiences at the university are the best that they can be.

To keep with this year’s theme, *17 Goals for a Future We Want*, the Disability Services team had a tree of hopes available for students, staff and community visitors to leave their hopes for a better future. The tree was a huge success and will be on display in Disability Services for viewing purposes.
Community Partners
The International Day of Persons with Disabilities is more than a day for staff and students to get together and learn about disabilities. Community Partners have the opportunity to get together to discover other services available locally.

A huge thank you to this year’s Community Partners:

- Assistive Technology British Columbia (ATBC)
- Barrier Free BC
- BC Schizophrenia Society
- Brain Injury Society
- Canadian Council of the Blind
- Canadian Diabetes Association
- Clay Tree Society
- Communication Assistance for Youth and Adults (CAYA)
- Island Deaf and Hard of Hearing Centre (IDHHC)
- Nanaimo Association for Community Living
- Nanaimo Disability Resource Centre
- Nanaimo Food Box
- Nanaimo Mental Health Adult Addictions Services
- Nanaimo Nitro Power Soccer
- Nanaimo Organization for the Vision Impaired (NOVI)
- Positive Space Alliance
- Special Olympics of BC – Nanaimo Chapter
- Supportive Apartment Living and Self-Advocates of Nanaimo
- Vancouver Island Compassion Dogs
- VIU Counselling
- Workplace Essential Skills and Training Program – VIU

If you know a community group who would benefit from being a part of the 2017 International Day encourage them to contact Disability Services at: disabilityservices@viu.ca

A huge thank-you goes out to all the staff, students and community partners who helped make this year’s event such a huge success!
See you again in 2017.
International Day of Persons with Disabilities—Continued

Tree of Hope  Display from Disability Services

Special Olympics BC—Nanaimo Branch

NOVI

Self Advocacy Group & Independent Living

Nanaimo Nitro Soccer

Island Deaf and Hard of Hearing Centre—IDHHC

International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2016 Theme: 17 Goals for a Future We Want
Dealing with Head Injuries

Head injuries can happen in an instant and bring with them long-lasting effects. Research into the long-term effects of concussions has shown that recovering from concussions can take substantially longer than previously believed.

According to the return to learn protocol created by the Concussion Toolkit Training Tool (CTTT) the minimum amount of time it can take to recover fully is 2 weeks. The toolkit maps out the phases of recovery and clearly outlines what should and should not be completed at each stage of recovery.

The CATT website is loaded with information on how to identify, treat and manage concussions.

Always remember that if you suspect yourself, or someone you know, has suffered a concussion, seek medical help immediately.

Did you know that Disability Services can help with temporary disabilities? This includes concussions and broken bones too!

Testimony

After suffering an eye injury I wasn’t sure how I would be able to complete my course load this semester.

Fortunately, after meeting with Mary Stasiuk I was able to complete my exams in Disability Services with accommodations allowing me additional time and was able to receive note taking support.

Thank you Disability Services for your help!

How Can Disability Services Help You?

The Disability Services Team is here to help ensure you have the best possible university experience. Whether you have a permanent disability or something more temporary like a broken arm or a concussion, Disability Services is here to help.

We can help with:

* Campus Orientation * Tutors
  * Exam Accommodation
* Note Taking Support * Priority Registration
* Alternate Format Texts * Interpreter Services
* Assistive Technology * Grant applications

Nanaimo Campus, Building 200-Second Floor, Room 214

Phone (250)740-6446

Email: disabilityservices@viu.ca
Check This Out! On Display—Disability Services Bulletin Boards

Every month the bulletin boards at Disability Services are updated to include information on upcoming days of awareness, various disabilities, tips and tricks for university, as well as upcoming events. The bulletin boards, located on the second floor of Building 200, are the perfect way to stay informed the great events happening on campus, and also to further your understanding about disabilities.

Previous bulletin boards have included information on Braille, famous people with disabilities, tips and tricks for surviving the cold weather, Autism awareness and information on how to interact with service dogs (hint - never pet a service dog without first obtaining permission from their handler. Service dogs can become distracted, putting their handler in danger when you interact with them.)

If you have suggestions for future bulletin boards, please email disabilityservices@viu.ca

Photo credits: Jaime Stephens
A Note from the Editor

In September 2015 I answered an advertisement in the Career Centre for a Student Assistant position with Disability Services. While I was prepared for the work that would follow, I wasn’t prepared for the amazing experience that would blossom from being a part of the Disability Services Team. Working with Disability Services has given me the opportunity to grow as a person; I can’t even begin to express how much it means to me.

Working on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities has been a positive experience and one that I am very proud to be a part of. I can see the benefit the day has for the staff and students at VIU, but equally important is the value to the community in which we operate.

Jaime Stephens

Awards and Scholarships

The next deadline for submitting your application for the numerous Awards & Scholarships available through Vancouver Island University is quickly approaching. Be sure to log onto your Student Account and complete your Scholarship, Award & Bursary Profile before March 31/2017 to be considered!

For more information on Awards & Scholarships contact the Financial Aid Department.

Location: Building 200, Room 205
Contact Information: Tel: 250-740-6423  Fax: 250-740-6229  Email: FinancialAidInfo@viu.ca

“Part of the problem with the word 'disabilities' is that it immediately suggests an inability to see or hear or walk or do other things that many of us take for granted. But what of people who can’t feel? Or talk about their feelings? Or manage their feelings in constructive ways? What of people who aren’t able to form close and strong relationships? And people who cannot find fulfillment in their lives, or those who have lost hope, who live in disappointment and bitterness and find in life no joy, no love? These, it seems to me, are the real disabilities.”

— Fred Rogers