

# SPRING NEWSLETTER

**EMPLOY**  
*Abilities*

MAY 2018

## Message from the Executive Director

The first quarter of 2018 has been very exciting for EmployAbilities. We launched our new website in January thanks to a donation from the Edmonton Community Foundation.

EmployAbilities Board of Directors approved a new three year strategic plan with a focus on awareness, engagement and building relationships. EmployAbilities has been providing training, education and employment supports for 44 years in Alberta. We need to share our story and the great work we are doing in supporting over 270 Albertans with disabilities and barriers find employment every year. I encourage you to read through the spring newsletter to see the impact EmployAbilities is making in the communities of Bonnyville, Cold Lake, Edmonton, Lac La Biche, St. Paul and Vegreville.

Sincerely,  
Jason Loewer  
Executive Director



*Congratulations Graduates!*  
**Restart your Career**



### *Alumni Thoughts:* Who I Was and Who I Am Now

I came to EmployAbilities with the knowledge that they could help me get back in to the workplace...I remember crying tears of joy I got my chance and I was so grateful for this opportunity...I broke my toe and was put on crutches. I still made it...I had committed myself to this program and I was not about to give up...I found a job working for Evolutionary Vision Marketing Inc. and advocated for myself to get an hourly wage so I could graduate...now I'm a positive accomplished woman!

*Allisha K, Learn 2 Earn graduate*

## North East Central



### Cold Lake First Nations 4th Annual Career Fair

Susan Forbes, our Employment Coordinator from Cold Lake participated in the 4th Annual First Nations Career Fair in March.

Held at the Cold Lake Agriplex, it was a busy event with approximately 300+ people attending. People from all over Alberta attended as participants and exhibitors.

Way to go Susan!

### Lac La Biche Power Up North Conference and Lac La Biche Volunteer Bistro



Melissa "Missy" Jackknife (Employment Facilitator) and Megan Shott (Practicum Student) at Power Up North Conference.

EmployAbilities was pleased to attend and have a booth at the Power Up North Conference in Lac La Biche.

Held at the Lac La Biche Campus of Portage College, the conference included informative sessions, keynotes and activities for all ages, stages and phases of employment.



Megan, Roger Poulin and Missy at the Volunteer Bistro



### The great team at EmployAbilities North and Lakeland Employment Services

#### *Alumni Thoughts:* The Next Chapter

I had spent a decade delivering mail in Edmonton and was injured on the job. Unable to continue in my chosen career, I reached out to EmployAbilities. I registered in the Restart Your Career Program. The people I met in class became friends and their support during the six months was wonderful. EmployAbilities gave me the skills and confidence to get a job with Voice Of Albertans with Disabilities as an Administrative Assistant. Now a year later, my skill set is making a change in the lives of others and my confidence in myself is continuing to grow as I take on more responsibilities in my career.

*Teresa Y, Restart Your Career graduate*



## We'll Miss You!!!

Two wonderful gentlemen have retired from EmployAbilities this year. Rolando Vergara from Restart Your Career and Roger Poulin from Lakeland Employment Services.

### Roger Poulin: *Employment Coach and Lover of Homonyms*

11-year EmployAbilities veteran Roger Poulin, from Lac La Biche, came to EA when he was on sabbatical and met EA supervisor Debbie Menard at a job fare at Portage College. He was interviewed a few weeks later and was told by Menard, "I new within 30 seconds I was going to hire you," to which Poulin responded, "What took you so long?"



Poulin said what kept him at EA was "being able to help people" and hearing the appreciation expressed by sum of them. He said it was good to "be able to empower somebody to move on so they no longer knead us."

Poulin plans to use his retirement thyme by doing work around the house and yard "that wasn't dun in 2007, 2008" and he also plans to "take some thyme to smell the roses." He is also involved with Road to Hope, a group of people who drive those with cancer to their appointments for no fee. "We try to remove one stressor from their illness," Poulin noted.

He said he also wants to spend more thyme with family.

See Roger's Homonym filled goodbye message follow this link:

<https://employabilities.ab.ca/rogers-story/>

### Rolando Vergara: *Computer and Technology Facilitator and Teacher for Life*

18-year EmployAbilities employee Rolando Vergara said goodbye to EmployAbilities in March 2018. Rolando Vergara's road to EmployAbilities was a winding one. He was a teacher in his home country of Chile and arrived in Canada in 1977 as a political exile after a military coup had occurred in Chile in 1973. Among other jobs, he taught Spanish, then went to MacEwan University and got a diploma in Computer Systems Management in Information Technology. He came to EmployAbilities in June 2000. Rolando says he loved his job of teaching computers in the EA Plus Program and then the Restart Your Career program. "It allows me to continue working in the education field, and my personal philosophy and values were pretty much in line with this place. I truly believe in what EmployAbilities does." Vergara said, "teaching is my way of making a difference in people's lives. I think after all these years, I have made a difference." This is borne out by the fact that he has received many letters from former students thanking him for his work. Rolando said it has been an honour to be with EmployAbilities for 18 years and a privilege to be part of a remarkable team whose main purpose in life is to serve others.



In retirement, he plans to travel, write (he has published a book of short stories called *Alboaradas y Tormentas*, or *Dawn and Storm*, which he wants to translate into English), and volunteer. "To me, this is a new beginning."

To read Rolando's heartfelt goodbye message, follow this link:

<https://employabilities.ab.ca/2396-2/>

### *Alumni Thoughts:* Grateful For All The Support

*I want to say that never in my whole career have I met or encountered such wonderful people like the staff at EmployAbilities. It is not just a job for them, it is a passion. The kindness, consideration, helpfulness and passion that you all have for your work and for the people that you all love to help...You go out of your way to make sure that I and many other students learn and understand and achieve...my deepest thanks for all you have done to guide me...that help me to get the job that I always wanted to have. I can now use a computer, better than ever, and I am extremely grateful for everything that you all have done for me.*

*Norman Lawrence, Putting Your Career In Gear participant*

## Participant Success Story: Martin Tollenaar

Upon arrival into our Restart Your Career program, Martin had several barriers preventing him from finding employment. He had been clean and sober for eight years living as a senior member in a recovery house. Our observations found Martin to be very insecure, negative, angry, unforgiving, and he stated that he only enrolled in the program to gain computer skills. At the time, Martin states, "When I first started here, I felt unsure about what I was doing. A lot of times I felt stupid and my self-esteem was at its lowest and I allowed my pride to get in the way."



With guidance and support for Martin from our team during the Professional Development portion of our program, he learned techniques in how to deal with stress and change, how to increase his self-esteem and confidence, display effective assertive communications skills, including conflict resolution techniques, teamwork, leadership, and supervisory skills. Most important of all was learning about attitude and mindsets and how to turn negatives into positives. He also learned about career planning, how to effectively write resumes and cover letters to apply for jobs, do cold calling, as well as present himself well during interviews.

Martin now states, "By focusing on the positive, I can keep on going and not have negative thoughts. My attitude towards everything has changed. I believe in myself and I feel more confident. I do know that I can succeed once I put my mind to it."

Martin admits how grateful he is for this experience and how much he has learned through professional development and about computers. He has made a 360 degree positive turn, from the man he was five months ago. Now faced with a life issue, he uses the techniques he learned and states, "I take a deep breath, remain calm, and ask myself what would my Case Manager do."

Martin completed his work experience and did so well that he was offered a full time job with DynaLife in their warehouse. He started April 23, 2018. Way to go Martin!!!



>>> The Learn 2 Earn team and Executive Director, Jason Loewer, trying to Escape together at a team building exercise. They didn't make it out in time, but they had fun trying!

To learn more about EmployAbilities and the programs offered, please contact us or visit our website.

Check us out on Facebook at [facebook.com/EmployAbilities](https://facebook.com/EmployAbilities).

*Please consider donating to EmployAbilities*

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