# August CNIB Foundation Saskatchewan Newsletter

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# Staff Profile

For Nanette Ermel, being a part of a passionate team and seeing the difference that we make in the lives of people with sight loss, is what motivates her.

"Over the past few years, it has been very exciting to see all our new programs come to life from rural peer groups, youth leadership, phone it forward to our internship programs."

Nanette Ermel is the manager of the Philanthropy for the CNIB Foundation Saskatchewan based out of the Regina office located at 2160 Broad Street.

In her role, she is responsible for developing and maintaining relationships with donors and stakeholders. This profile includes raising funds for the new CNIB Guide Dog program. But of course, her job has many other facets and she is often seen lending a helping hand to staff and chatting with clients and participants.

Before working at CNIB, Nanette, had no experience working for a charitable organization. She had worked for the Government of Saskatchewan for 15 years and in the pedigreed seed industry for five years.

"When I came to CNIB I discovered that my passion is making a difference in the lives of the people we serve."

She enjoys, working with community organizations and service clubs, like the Saskatchewan Lion's Clubs. "I recently visited the Lion's Clubs of Estevan, when visiting with them you see the passion that they have in serving their communities and its contagious."

"I like to think that I bring this passion with me to every meeting and that when I am in a meeting I am not only looking for support from the Donor's I am also educating them about this important cause and the difference that their donation makes in the lives of those who are blind or partially sighted."

For more information or to make a donation or to sponsor one of CNIB's many great programs in Saskatchewan contact Nanette at email: nanette.ermel@cnib.ca or call: 306-565-5411.

# Guide Dog Handler Profile

Rich Letourneau's 38-year-journey as a passionate guide dog handler began as a way to gain more freedom and independence but, became so much more.

"My primary reason now is I love being a guide dog handler. I love working with and relating to a guide dog," said the 54-year-old Regina resident.

Working with his fifth guide dog, Jake, a German Shepherd he's gained some wisdom through his years of experience.

"First of all, there's lots of responsibility involved in becoming a handler and a dog is more maintenance than a cane. But having said that, you are taught all of the skills you need to learn to accept that responsibility and incorporate that guide dog into your life through the school you go to."

Making a good case about Saskatchewan winters being hard to maneuver with a cane, he worked through an extensive application process to the Seeing Eye Guide Dog School. The Seeing Eye agreed that he needed a guide dog when he was only 16 years old.

"In general, guide dog schools don't train younger than 16. They want their graduates to be responsible adults with good learning skills. You will need to be responsible for another being and to do a little discipline, as well as, being responsible for showing and demonstrating lots of love to your guide dog."

The first time he trained with a guide dog there were a lot of skills he needed to learn.

"When you go to a well-established guide dog school, they are regimented in a way that you have no choice but to learn and gain independence. I call it boot camp for dog handling."

For just under a month in 1981 he stayed at the Seeing Eye in Morristown, New Jersey. He trained with his first guide dog, Sheba. He was taught how to work, bond and foster trust with his dog.

He matured quickly and grew as a person in a number of ways because of becoming a guide dog handler.

"I became more responsible as I was all of a sudden responsible for another being in a real concrete way."

There were other benefits as well, public transportation travel became easier and his physical fitness level increased as he walked as much as he could.  “It‘s just more efficient and more enjoyable to move around with a guide dog than it is with a cane”.

However, Letourneau wasn't prepared for how much he would have to answer questions and stop interference from the general public when he was out. But other personal skills were gained because this.

"It was a struggle for the first 20 or so years of me being a handler having to deal with the general public. There are the silly questions you have to field because they don't know what goes into a guide dog team. I had to learn how to be assertive and then merciful knowing people aren't really trying to be as disruptive as they end up being."

Moving forward he wants the public to understand the following: "It takes lots of concentration on the part of the handler and guide dog to move together in an organized or synchronized way. As we are moving along, a subtle or slight change in pace, body direction, touch of the leash or harness can communicate various pieces of information.  There are also specific direct hand and verbal commands that guide dog handlers use when directing or communicating with their dogs.  In turn, a guide dog communicates back to their handler through subtle or slight changes in pace, body direction, pausing or stopping to wait for encouragement or the next command to continue moving or to proceed forward.

It is never appropriate to interact with, talk to, make eye contact with or touch a guide dog unless you have the handler's permission."

Now four dogs and 38 years later he is still growing as a guide dog handler and takes very opportunity to do so.

"Handlers have lots of responsibilities. Keeping your dog well behaved in public is ongoing and you can always learn something new. It's all a part of taking responsibility for your life and this awesome being you have incorporated into your life that has made me more independent. "

For information on the Seeing Eye go to <https://www.seeingeye.org/>.

or CNIB's Guide Dog Program go to <https://cnib.ca/en/programs-and-services/live/cnib-guide-dogs?region=sk>.

CNIB also has a Guide Dog Group that meets in the Regina office. For more information call Ashley at 306-525-2571.

# Staff Advice

As a guide dog handler, we out of necessity, become daily advocates. You need to advocate to have access to public spaces like everyone else, or advocate and educate people on why they cannot distract a guide dog. This can be one of the most overwhelming parts of being a guide dog handler. You can go from feeling invisible with a white cane, to having people ask inappropriate questions, constantly touching and distracting your dog, and being the centre of attention everywhere you go.

When you are advocating for yourself, and your rights as a guide dog handler, there are a few tips that I can give you from my experience as a guide dog handler and the program lead for advocacy for CNIB Foundation in Saskatchewan.

Tip one: Treat people kindly, they are genuinely interested in what you have to say, for the most part. Keep your interaction with people, even when it is frustrating, kind and respectful as will get you much farther in educating them. Try to remember, you are not only educating for yourself, but for the next time they interact with another person who is blind that may have a guide dog.

Tip two: Education is key. Many times, we forget that the blind and partially sighted world is not something the general public will encounter or know much about. It is not because they are mean and want to come across as rude, it is because they don’t know what they don’t know. When we educate people on why they can’t pet a guide dog for example, they are usually grateful and will then know better for next time.

Tip three: People love dogs and they are interested in what they are doing. Guide Dogs are amazing animals that do amazing things, keep that in mind when you are speaking with people who have questions when you are out and about. Because so many misperceptions exist about what people with sight loss are capable of, they may have a very unrealistic picture of what blindness actually looks like. Give them a better picture.

Tip four: Know where to get support. If you run into a situation where you are refused access or service because of your guide dog. The CNIB Foundation has many resources on how to be a successful advocate and we can also support you through your advocacy efforts. Online resources are located here <https://cnib.ca/en/programs-and-services/live/cnib-guide-dogs/guide-dog-handlers/guide-dog-advocacy?region=sk>.

If you would like any more information on advocacy please reach out and I would be happy to help you by calling 306-525-2571 ext. 6423 or by email at ashely.nemeth@cnib.ca

Ashley Nemeth

Program Lead, Community Engagement and Advocacy

# Announcements

## Saskatoon's New Office Open House will take place on Wednesday, September 18, 2019 from 4:00-6:00 p.m. The new Saskatoon office is located at 1149 8th Street, just off Munroe Ave. Tours will take place and refreshments will be served. RSVP by Monday, September 16, 2019 to Cheryl at 306-667-2232 or by emailing cheryl.mcbean@vlrehab.ca.

## Phone It Forward

Donate your old smartphone to the Phone it Forward program and change the life of someone with vision loss. Prepaid donation envelopes available at any Saskatchewan Scotiabank, Vogue Optical in Saskatoon and FYidoctors in Regina on Grant Road or CNIB office. [https://bit.ly/2MVRY7L](https://bit.ly/2MVRY7L?fbclid=IwAR38yMG35FeNn4f1xuTun2Cxzc682luC3JKMu8kw4JM_wBSF98ubnFsHXvM).

## Unused Equipment returns

Please return any unused canes or magnifiers as CNIB will redistribute the items to clients who don't qualify for funding.

# Upcoming CNIB Conferences and Events

**Vision Loss Rehabilitation on Location Days**

The Vision Loss Rehabilitation Saskatchewan team will be traveling around Saskatchewan over the coming months. Onsite at each of the below locations the staff will be providing low vision assessments, community outreach, orientation & mobility, independent living skills, assistive technology, career & employment counselling and shop items will be available for purchase. Information sessions on technology, eye conditions and peer support will take place. To pre-book an appointment with one of the specialists or for more information call in the North, 306-374-4545 in the South, 306-525-2571.

**Swift Current**

When: October 2-3

Where: TBA

**Moose Jaw**

When: October 22-23

Where: Providence Place (Rose Room 2 & 3)- 100 2nd Ave NE

**Prince Albert**

When: October 16-17

Where: Prince Albert Arts Center 1010 Central Ave.

**Kindersley**

When: October 29-31

Where: St. Olaf Lutheran Church 807 3 St. W.

# Halloween Family Fun Day

Your invited to our Family Fun Day on Sunday, October 27, 2019 from 1:30-3:30 p.m. Join us for activities, crafts and games.

**Regina**

Where: Girl Guide Building located at 1530 Broadway Ave.

RSVP by Monday, October 21, 2019 to Ashley Nemeth at 306-565-2571 or ashley.nemeth@cnib.ca

**Saskatoon**

Where: Our new Saskatoon office located at 1149 8th Street.

RSVP by Monday, October 21, 2019 to Paige Andreas at 306-374-4545 or paige.andreas@cnib.ca

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# CNIB Foundation Saskatchewan Programs

For information on all Southern Saskatchewan (Regina) CNIB groups and programs contact Ashley Nemeth at 306-525-2571 ext. 6423 or email: ashley.nemeth@cnib.ca

For information on all Northern Saskatchewan (Saskatoon) CNIB groups and programs contact Paige Andreas at 306-374-4545 ext. 6443 or email: paige.andreas@cnib.ca

For information on all rural Peer Support programs contact Paige Andreas at 306-374-4545 ext. 6443 or email: paige.andreas@cnib.ca

# Support Groups and Support Programs

**Guide Dog Group**In this group guide dog handlers are able to come together and learn from each other as well as support each other through the challenges of having a guide dog and being a guide dog handler. This group is also a great resource for those who are interested in getting a guide dog, to ask questions and get the perspective of a variety of handlers from a variety of guide dog schools. The group is also a way to support handlers who are going through retirement or death of a guide dog.

**Date:** Third Tuesday of the month starting in September (subject to change depending on availability) **Location:** CNIB Regina board room 2160 Broad St. Regina  **Time:** 6:00 – 7:00 p.m.

For more information or to attend a meeting contact Ashley Nemeth at 306-525-2571 ext. 6423 or email: ashley.nemeth@cnib.ca

Peer Support Group (Teleconferencing opportunities are available)
For individuals 55+ who are blind or partially sighted, this group allows participants to connect with others who are experiencing similar circumstances, to participate in social gatherings, and the opportunity to learn from guest speakers about a variety of relevant topics.

**Estevan**Dates: Every third Tuesday of the month September to June
Time: TBD
Location: TBD

**Moose Jaw**

Where: Caleb Village, 917 Bradley Ave

When: Every third Tuesday of the month from September to June.

Time: 1:00-2:00 p.m.

**Prince Albert**
Where: South Hill Medical Centre, 2685 2 Ave W, in the Board Room
When: Every Fourth Tuesday of the month from September to June.
Time:  1:00-2:30 p.m.

**Regina**

Where: CNIB, 2160 Broad St., Multipurpose room OR telephone options for those not in Regina.
When: Every second and fourth Tuesday starting September 25.
Time: 1:00 – 2:30 p.m.

**Saskatoon**

Where: CNIB, 1149 8th St, Multipurpose Room.

When: Every first and third Tuesday of the month starting September 18.

Time: 1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

**Weyburn**Dates: Every third Tuesday of the month September to June
Time: TBD
Location: TBD

**Yorkton**Dates: Every third Tuesday of the month September to June
Time: TBD
Location: TBD

Care Partners (Teleconferencing opportunities are available)This program is designed for family members, friends, or partners who are supporting a loved one with vision loss. This program offers participants the opportunity to share their experiences and gain coping skills.

This is a 12-week program that meets biweekly.

**Regina**

Where: CNIB, 2160 Broad St., Multipurpose Room
When: Every second Thursday evening April 11, 2019 – June, 2019.

Time: 6:30-7:30 p.m.

**Saskatoon**

Where: TBA

When: TBA

Time: TBA

Vision Mate Program
Our Vision Mate Program matches individuals living with vision loss with specially-trained volunteers who offer companionship and one-on-one assistance with day-to-day tasks and errands.

Vision mate volunteers assist individuals with a variety of activities, including reading mail, grocery shopping, errands, labeling and organizing household items, as well as enjoying leisure and recreational activities together – like playing cards and going for walks.

**Regina**

For more information contact Ashley Nemeth at ashley.nemeth@cnib.ca or 306-525-2571 ext.6423.

**Saskatoon**

For more information contact Paige Andreas at paige.andreas@cnib.ca or 306-374-4545 ext. 6443.

## Youth Leadership (Teleconferencing opportunities are available)

This program is designed to provide youth who are blind or partially sighted opportunities to develop leadership, advocacy, and compensatory skills in a social setting with the goal of building self-esteem, confidence, social and community engagement, and self-efficacy (empowerment).

**Regina**

Where: CNIB, 2160 Broad St., Multipurpose Room

When: Every second Tuesday of the month, September 10, October 8, November 12, December 10 and January 14.

Time: 6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

**Saskatoon**

Where: CNIB, 1149 8th Street, Multipurpose room

When: Every first Tuesday of the month (except for September), September 10, October 1, November 5, December 3, January 7, February 4, March 3, April 7, May 5,

Time: 6:30– 7:30 p.m.

Family Fun Days
These days provide opportunities for families (in which one or more individuals has vision loss) to meet with others for a fun activity.

These events take place two times a year in Saskatoon and Regina. The next date is October 27th as posted in the event section.

# CNIB Sports and Recreation Programs

Fitness Progra**ms**

Yoga

This is an all-inclusive yoga class that caters to all skill levels and abilities. If you are not able to get down on the floor you are able to do it from a chair. This is intended to be a light yoga class that will help you stretch and relax in a safe space. This class runs for 6-8 weeks a session.

**Regina**

Where: CNIB, 2160 Broad St.
When: Third Wednesday of the month October to December and January to March
Time: 6:30-7:30 p.m.

**Saskatoon**

Where: TBA
When: TBA
Time: TBA

Arts and Culture NightBudding artists ages 18+, who are blind or partially sighted. Join volunteers at a CNIB Centre for an evening of arts and crafts such as painting, sculpting and socializing. Art supplies are provided.

Also included in this program are cultural experiences/activities which could include, learning a new instrument, taking a cooking class, taking in the symphony, going to a tactile art exhibit or a museum or going as a group to a musical performance.

**Regina**

**Art Class in partnership with the Dunlop Art Gallery**

Where: CNIB, 2160 Broad Street

When: The last Wednesday of each month. October to April

Time: 6:00-8:00 p.m.

**Saskatoon**

Where: TBA

When: TBA

Time: TBA

**Knitting Program**

**Regina**

This program will take place at The Naked Sheep and will be a way for those who are interested in learning to knit or crochet to be able to do this. There will be one to one help so that participants can learn the basics and each class will add to their skills and build on what they have learned at the previous class.

Where: The Naked Sheep 104 College Ave.

When: September 19 to October 10

Time: 2:00-4:00 p.m.

Kids CampsOur summer day camps in Regina and Saskatoon provide an opportunity for kids aged 8 to 18 to enjoy recreational activities with their peers, while both enhancing and building life skills.

The camp focuses on travelling safely, socializing, preparing meals independently, keeping active and self-advocacy.

**Regina and Saskatoon**

When: July 31-Aug 1, 2019 (ages 5-11)

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# [CNIB Foundation Saskatchewan Technology Groups and Programs](#_Technology_Programs)

**Teaching Tech Group**

Come and learn about different transit, cab, and ride share apps. Bring your phone, iPad, computer or other devices and ask questions or get help using assistive technology. This group is aimed at helping people to be able to use assistive technology to its fullest potential. We will be learning different apps as well as programs like Word, Excel, Power Point, and Outlook using JAWS.

The session is free and takes place at CNIB.

Contact Ashley Nemeth for more information or to register ashley.nemeth@cnib.ca or call 306-525-2571 ext. 6423

**Regina**

Where: CNIB, 2160 Broad St.

Next date: August 22. Stay tuned for future dates.

Time: 6:00-8:00 p.m.

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# Community Associations, Groups, Sports and Recreation Programs

Canadian Council of the Blind (CCB): The CCB is a national self-help consumer organization whose membership consists of persons who are blind, deafblind, or who have significant vision loss. They offer social, recreational, informational, and awareness-building programs. For more information on the CCB Moose Jaw White Cane Club and the CCB Regina Chapter, contact the Regina CNIB office at 306-525-2571.

Canadian Deafblind Association (Saskatchewan Chapter): The organization is committed to assisting all persons who are deafblind to achieve, with intervention, the best quality of life. For further information on the Saskatchewan Chapter contact Dana Heinrichs, Executive Director at cdba.sk@shaw.ca or by phone at 306-374-0022.

**Lions Wilderness Experience: For anyone, of any age and any ability, who has special needs. The camp runs for two weeks starting the Monday after the August long weekend at the Northern Lights Lodge in Hanson Lake. For more information about the cost or to apply for sponsorship call Ken Schuster at 306-744-2481 or Paul Danis at 306-233-4858.**

**Moose Jaw White Cane Club:** The Moose Jaw White Cane Club regularly meets the first Tuesday of each month, except for January, for suppers (September, November, December, February and May), and club meetings (October, March and April), at the Timothy Gardens Senior Center. For more information call Kelly at 306-692-2215.

**Regina Public Library’s Audio Book Club:** For those living with vision loss. Every month discuss a new book. For more info or to register call 306-777-6019.

Regina and Saskatoon Tech Ease Drop-in/Getting Together with Technology Group: This is a group run by VIRN (Vision Impaired Resource Network) in collaboration with CCB. Each week a different pre-determined topic is discussed and explored around technology and how it can enhance the lives of those with vision loss. Friends and family are welcome as well as those living with any degree of vision loss.

**In Regina:**

Where: Central Branch of the Regina Public Library, Outreach unit

When: The last Saturday of the month starting in September.

Time: 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

For more information contact Michelle at michelle.busch@sasktel.net or call 306-526-6129.

**In Saskatoon:**

Where: Downtown Library Saskatoon Public Library, Outreach unit

For more information on times and dates contact Doug at Rudolph's@virn.ca or call 639-470-3523.

Saskatchewan Blind Sports Association **(SBSA) was founded in 1978 and is a volunteer based not-for-profit organization that facilitates provincial, national and international sports opportunities for Saskatchewan residents who are blind or partially sighted. The following are (but not limited to) the core sports that SBSA facilitates: Dragon boating, goalball, lawn bowls, curling, bowling, and golf.**

**SBSA is presently trying to reinvigorate goalball in the province. Anyone interested in participating, coaching or volunteering please call the number below.**

**For more information call 1-877-772-7798 or email** sbsa@shaw.ca **or visit** [www.saskblindsports.ca](http://www.saskblindsports.ca)

**Saskatoon Book Club: Everybody's Book Club is a drop-in program for readers of all abilities. Books are available in many formats audio, ebooks, large print and regular print. The book club doesn't run through the summer. Held the last Tuesday of every month starting in the Fall at the Frances Morrison Library located on 311-23rd Street East from 2-3:30 p.m. For more information call 306-975-7558.**

Saskatoon Blind Skiers: Is looking for new members. An Accessible Activity for People with Low Vision. The group meet on Saturday mornings at 10:00 – 12:00, and ski (or walk) for one hour, followed by having coffee and socializing together for one hour.  After the snow melts, they continue weekly walks until the middle of May. Membership fees are $45 annually. **For more information please contact:** Conrad Lange at 306-477-2227 or Joanne Ferguson at joanne.ferguson@sasktel.net or Judy Prociuk at 306-931-1981.

**Unique Like Us:** Is a social group for people who are blind or partially sighted in Regina. The group meets once a month to do an activity or listen to a guest speaker. All activities are predetermined by the group. For more information contact Thelma at 306-569-0235.

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# Technology and Rate plans

## Sasktel Discount Rate Program

Through CNIB’s stewardship, SaskTel has created a Wireless Accessibility Credit ($15 Wireless Credit) for customers who identify as Blind, Deaf, or hard of hearing. The Wireless Accessibility Credit provides customers with the flexibility to choose a converged rate plan with a data bucket that best suits their data consumption needs. The credit was created to offset the costs of components of a plan that a customer may not able to use. A Self-declaration form must be filled out in order to receive the credit. You can find the form here:

<http://www.sasktel.com/special-needs/vision-solutions>

## Telus Discount Rate and Accessible Services

Telus has a rate plans for people with disabilities and services that are accessible. For more information go to: <http://www.telus.com/en/sk/get-help/accessibility/topic.do?&INTCMP=TcomFooter_accessibility>

# Volunteer Opportunities

## Regina Volunteer Opportunities:

* Bingo Volunteers – work bingos in Regina and raise money for CNIB that will make a difference for those with vision loss.
* Vision Mates – Volunteers to work with someone who is blind or partially sighted. Helping with shopping groceries, opening mail and organizing household items.
* Peer Group Leaders - Volunteers helps to facilitate meetings that are outlined by CNIB and the participants.
* Phone Drive Volunteers – Help collect smartphone donations.

## Saskatoon Volunteer Opportunities:

* Admin Volunteers – answer phones and perform administrative tasks.
* Event Volunteers – join us at one of our events and make a difference.
* Driver Guides –Drive staff and volunteers with vision loss, provide support and orientation at their destination.
* Phone Drive Volunteers – Help collect smartphone donations.
* Vision Mates – Volunteers to work with someone who is blind or partially sighted. Helping with shopping groceries, opening mail and organizing household items.
* Peer Group Leaders – Volunteers helps to facilitate meetings that are outlined by CNIB and the participants.

If any of these opportunities sound like something you would like to try please contact:

In Regina, Ashley Nemeth at ashley.nemeth@cnib.ca or call 306-565-5413.

In Saskatoon, Paige Andreas at paige.andreas@cnib.ca or call 306-374-4545 etx. 6443.

Thank you to our partner:

