

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Video contest invites entrepreneurs with disabilities to tell their stories

BY RYAN HALL

Entrepreneurs are the backbone of any economy. However, it takes a lot of hard work to start, and grow, your own business. Most of the time no one sees all that effort, which makes it difficult to appreciate how dedicated these people are. That's where the Just Watch ME! Video contest comes in, providing a platform to showcase local, rural, entrepreneurs and tell their stories. This December 3, things kick off once more, as part of the annual International Day of Persons with Disabilities celebrations.

The Just Watch ME! Contest began in 2011 as an initiative of the Community Futures' Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program to increase awareness of individuals with disabilities who are also self-employed. To do this, they decided to invite business owners to tell their stories in their own words, asking for short, two-to-three-minute videos, which would then be part of a regional contest. "We wanted to build excitement and celebrate success while also encouraging other people with disabilities to consider self-employment," says Susan Bater, Entrepreneurs with Disabilities program manager.

While the Just Watch Me! Program is part of a larger, national campaign, the local contest has its own unique flavour. Specifically, any individual within Manitoba or Saskatchewan who has a disability or health condition, and is operating a small rural business, is eligible to participate. Additionally, entrants are divided into two categories: Start Up (for businesses that have been in operation for less than a year), or Seasoned Entrepreneur (businesses that have been in operation for over a year).

Each video is viewed by a panel of judges representing the Saskatchewan and Manitoba business and disability community. Their job is to select two provincial winners from the Start Up entrants, and decide on four finalists in the Seasoned Category, with an open vote by the general public determining that winner. The top vote getter receives \$1000 in cash and prizes, with descending dollar amounts for the second, third and fourth place finishers. Finally, each Start Up provincial winner is awarded \$250 in cash and prizes.

No matter where they finish, the act of telling their story in their own words has an empowering affect on those who participate. "Not only does it give them a voice to be heard," says Bater, "but it allows them to connect with other people and become part of a larger community."

Perhaps the most striking feature of the contest is that wide variety of small businesses that exist across the prairie provinces. Whether it's providing wireless internet in rural Manitoba (2012 winner Chris Gaulin, Wi-Fi Country Inc.), recycling pick-up service (2013-14 winner Taylor Layton, Taylor's Recycling Pick-up), photogra-



Louisa Reddekopp, the founder of Fire Moon Soap Co. in Rosthern, placed third in the Just Watch ME! Seasoned Entrepreneur Category in 2018. SUPPLIED PHOTO



Lori Kobialko, founder of Arts in the Alley in Rosthern, placed fourth in the Just Watch ME! Seasoned Entrepreneur Category in 2018. SUPPLIED PHOTO

phy (2015-16 winner Apryl Harel, Apryl Harel Photography), or animal-assisted therapies (2017 winner Lucy Fouasse, Lil' Steps Miniature & Wellness Farm), there's no limit to the creativity. This year, the top prize went to Lorena Mitchell, the owner of EvolveGreen.ca from Marchand, Manitoba. Her company has over 15 years experience in the field of alternative energy, building and designing solutions for clients.

As mentioned above, the 2019 contest kicks off on December 3 and videos can be submitted until 10:00 a.m. on January 22, 2019. The judges' decisions will be announced on January 28, with public voting beginning February 1 and closing on February 11. The winner will be announced February 15.

All eligible small business own-

ers are invited to create their video story and join in the fun. Contest details and entry instructions can be found at on the official contest website www.justwatchmecontest.ca. As well, for those who feel overwhelmed by the thought of making a video, or aren't sure how to get started, there are also several helpful guidelines and suggestions available. Bater says the best advice is to just be yourself: "The most important thing is to explain why you choose this path, and what it has meant to you. Every story is unique and deserves to be heard."

For more information visit www.justwatchmecontest.ca. To follow the contest, check out the EDPvideocontest Facebook page, the edpJustwatchme Twitter account, or their Instagram account @edpjustwatchme.

CELEBRATING
50
YEARS
EXPANDING POTENTIAL
SARC

50 years of supporting people experiencing disability to achieve their goals and live in inclusive communities

A DAY OF EMPOWERMENT

Since 1992, the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) has been annually observed on 3 December around the world. The theme for this year's IDPD is "Empowering persons with disabilities and ensuring inclusiveness and equality."

This theme focuses on the empowering persons with disabilities for the inclusive, equitable and sustainable development envisaged in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The 2030 Agenda, pledging to "leave no one behind," is an ambitious plan of action of the international community towards a peaceful and prosperous world, where dignity of an individual person and equality among all is applied as the fundamental principle, cutting across the three pillars of the work of the United Nations: Development, Human Rights and Peace and Security. It is critical to ensure, in this regard, the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in all spheres of society and create enabling environments by, for and with persons with disabilities.

The 2030 Agenda places great importance on issues related to sustainable urbanization, particularly in Goal 11: make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. There can be no sustainable development without sustainable urban development.

The UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Develop-

ment (Habitat III), held in Quito, Ecuador in 2016, recognized the importance of adopting a smart-city approach that makes use of opportunities from digitalization, clean energy and technologies, as well as innovative transport technologies, thus providing options for inhabitants to make more environmentally friendly choices and boost sustainable economic growth and enabling cities to improve their service delivery.

This year, the Secretary-General of the United Nations is launching a first-ever flagship report on disability and development UN Flagship Report on Disability and Development | 2018 – Realizing the SDGs by, for and with persons with disabilities, The Report provides an evidence base for disability-inclusive policy-making, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of an inclusive, accessible and sustainable global development agenda.

The commemoration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities at UN Headquarters will bring together Member States, UN entities, Mayors, national and local policy makers, civil society organizations, academic institutes and organizations of persons with disabilities to discuss the way forward for inclusive, equitable and sustainable development, in conjunction with the launch of this Secretary-General's Flagship Report on Disability and Development to be issued as part of the commemoration of the Day. – www.un.org

Supporting Individuals with
Intellectual Disabilities in Saskatchewan
www.inclusionsk.com

IN SK INCLUSION SASKATCHEWAN

Be yourself and soar with us

Your individuality is an asset

Be distinct. Be original. Be yourself.
Celebrate International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 3.

fcc.ca/Careers

