



Probis Club of Central Edmonton

April 2017

Editor: Ken Hoffman

Speaker: April 18– Karen Slater, Steadward Centre

Karen Slater, the Director of the Steadward Centre for Personal and Physical Achievement, described how it specializes in adapted physical activity and para-sport development.

It supports 1,000 adults and children with permanent disabilities, half of whom are autistic; some suffer from stroke impairment. It was formerly known as the Rick Hansen Centre. With 250 students, this part of the U of A supports teaching and researchers in this field. The Centre expanded to a new 17,000 sq. ft. facility in 2016. It is not involved in rehabilitation.

Its aim is to inspire individual physical achievement, locally and provincially. It has been able to train adults trying out for the Canadian team at the next Para-Olympics.

An advisory group of participants has improved the relevance of the Centre's programs. This has led to new programs such as dance and cycling. More acceptable guidelines for photography of participants have been developed. A better understanding of "the hidden labour" of parents has also emerged.

The expertise of the Centre is shared with other partners such as Servus Place. This approach has enhanced adapted-fitness programs for similar groups of adults, and to assist the selection and configuration of para-fitness equipment.

Research at the Centre is related to neuro-science to promote understanding of how muscle stimulation triggers muscle contraction. Assessment protocols have also been developed.

Its students gain experience through practicums, teaching, and volunteer opportunities.

Tour: April 25– U of A Steadward Centre for Personal and Physical Achievement

As noted above the Steadward Centre's mission is to promote individual achievement in adapted physical activity and para-sport through research, shared knowledge and delivery of programs for individuals experiencing disability. The Centre is part of the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation and is housed in the Van Vliet Complex. The tour of the facilities expanded members' understanding and appreciation of the Centre's programs as outlined by Karen Slater, the Centre's Director, in her presentation to the Club on April 17.

The newly expanded 17,000 square foot facility include small gyms (previously squash courts), equipment and exercise rooms, spacious washrooms (including showers designed for wheelchair users), plus space for staff and volunteers. The adjacent pool is convenient for water activities. The Centre operates five programs. We witnessed school children participating in (and obviously enjoying) the Free2BEMe program, and a demonstration of the Functional Electrical Stimulation Exercise program.

The Centre's staff and volunteers serve over 1000 people ranging from children to seniors with a diversity of disabilities.

Besides the University's contribution, the Steadward Centre is supported by a wide variety of organizations and individuals with the bulk of the financial funding coming from the Alberta Sport Connection.

Bob Steadward was an alumni and graduate of the University of Alberta who achieved prominence as a founder of the Paralympics and his service to disability sports. His honors include membership in the Order

of Canada, the International Olympic Order and the International Paralympic Order.

The Club members thank the staff of the Centre for the interesting and informative tour.