

Make a Difference - “Start with Hi”

All of us feel vulnerable at some time during our daily lives. You may feel like someone is following you home, or you get lost and need to ask for directions. The natural instinct is to look around for someone to help. Many people with developmental disabilities have a harder time making these kinds of informal connections. They can be more socially isolated, which puts them at greater risk when they face situations where they feel vulnerable.

Community Living BC (CLBC), a provincial Crown agency, believes adults with developmental disabilities and their families have the right to pursue “good lives in welcoming communities”. Part of a good life is feeling safe where you live, go to school, work and play. CLBC is committed to providing education, support and leadership to encourage networks and partnerships that help adults with developmental disabilities feel safe and secure wherever they live.

Start with Hi, a CLBC public awareness initiative, supports this commitment by encouraging all British Columbians to say “Hi” to a person they see regularly who has a developmental disability. CLBC is inviting organizations from across the province to Start with Hi, and help create inclusive communities for all British Columbians.

The website, www.startwithhi.ca, is informative and interactive. The site features videos of five people with developmental disabilities who share their different experiences and stories about inclusion. The site also encourages British Columbians to share their own written stories of inclusion and acknowledgement on the site, or on Facebook, Twitter or Flickr.

“My son...is autistic...the friendly acknowledgement from those around him has an immeasurable impact on him... We are very grateful to those who greet him with a warm hello and have taken the time to get to know him.”

– excerpt from a Start with Hi story

There are also posters and rack cards featuring the five self-advocates (see photos). CLBC is offering organizations across BC the opportunity to request copies of these materials by calling the local CLBC office in their area (the number can be found at www.communitylivingbc.ca > **Your Community**, or in the blue pages of your local phonebook).

Great things can happen through small actions. CLBC asks that everyone just start with “Hi” and take it from there. It can be the beginning of a small connection that can lead to a larger sense of safety, belonging and welcome for someone in your community.



There are five posters created for the campaign, featuring five self-advocates from across BC. Cliff is from Surrey.



The rack cards feature all five self-advocates, and inform people how to get involved in the campaign.