**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT**

To the Members of BALANCE

For the Year Ending March 31, 2014

BALANCE had two exceptional volunteers this year, Jennifer Johnson and Richard Childs. They volunteered to facilitate both staff and board planning meetings. Jennifer worked with the board of director’s strategic planning committee to create a new vision and mission statement that has broadened BALANCE’s scope to encompass a more global view of accessibility for people who are blind and vision impaired.

Richard has worked tirelessly with staff, developing a new vision of structure and programming for BALANCE that would fit in with the concept of a centre. He also facilitated the Leadership Group assisting us to organize our vision into manageable steps. We are very grateful to both for their generosity in sharing their time and valuable talents to support BALANCE. Both these volunteers deserve a medal!

The administrative support we receive from our ongoing volunteers, Jennifer Griffiths, Simon Qiggaittuq, and Lucy Misasi is also very valuable to us, especially to Laura Antal who keeps the office organized and functioning smoothly. I know how much she appreciates the help.

There was a lot of discussion about developing a program that would assist in alleviating some of the isolation that has been felt by older adults living alone with little support. In focus groups we heard about people wanting a place to congregate and socialize, or to learn with others in a group setting. Studies show that a high percentage of learning and emotional support comes through peers and peer support. Many conversations have taken place on how to develop a training centre that allows for this type of learning and gathering. Spadina was too small (and currently even smaller due to our downsizing) and we were split between two offices, paying rent for both spaces. Joining the administrative office and the Training centre seems like a good idea. We can increase the size and include a real mix of activities. In addition, BALANCE will be in a more enhanced position to invite effective partners and look at creating social enterprise. The greatest barrier to overcome is securing enough funding to see us through the change. We will keep you posted…!

BALANCE held a fun fundraising event at the Absolute Comedy club. There was a good turnout and we had lots of laughs, all for a good cause. Thanks to all of those who supported us with this event.

We achieved our second year of accreditation by CARF as we maintained our excellent standard of service. 2016 will see us preparing for a new CARF audit which falls on our 30th anniversary. Starting with 10 participants in September of 1986, we will be planning a celebration for sure!

Colin Haines, a long past participant donated $10,000 to create the Colin Haines Fund which has continued to grow each year. This excellent resource is a fund that offers BALANCE participants financial assistance to make a special purchase towards anything that adds to their independence and/or quality of life. This year the fund was used to purchase a large display Snapfon, a Pen Friend, Zoomtext keyboard, help with moving costs and computer costs and counselling sessions.

On staff we said goodbye to Tom Dekker, who’s gone on to do new and exciting things and to Andrea Groen when she moved out of town. We will see Anita Moyano returning from her mat leave and Bill Phung has agreed to stay on staff.

BALANCE for Blind Adults served 185 people in the past year, offering a mix of ongoing support, and/or sessions to achieve greater independence.

We have moved beyond piloting the remote learning initiative having held numerous successful sessions, which is fast becoming a popular program. Topics have included; Understanding ADP, Independent Travel using GPS, Access to Sports part 1. Future sessions planned include Access to Sports part 2 & 3, Accessible Travel Tips, Street Safety, ODSP Income, Emergency Preparedness, Navigation Apps, and Managing Vision Loss.

Thank you to our chair Naz Husain, for her tireless support of BALANCE. Her passion is infectious and her willingness to get to the bottom of things an asset to the organization. Also thanks to the hard working committees. The fundraising and social committee created a wonderful fundraising event in the comedy night and silent auction. It was fun and fruitful. The Strategic Planning committee spent many evenings on thought provoking ideas, focussing in on our future plans. Denis Montpetit, in his role as Treasurer and advisor, has been a great asset to me. I truly appreciate Denis’s astute input.

It is with honour that I recognize the brilliant work done by the members of the Program Planning Committee lead by Paula, plus members Doug, Shane, and Bill. They proved to have great insight and integrity, evaluating the priorities of our programs and identifying how valuable services such as BALANCE are to our community and to the greater healthcare system. I am so impressed with their work and their ability to pull together as a strong and cohesive team.

Respectfully submitted

Sue Archibald

Executive Director