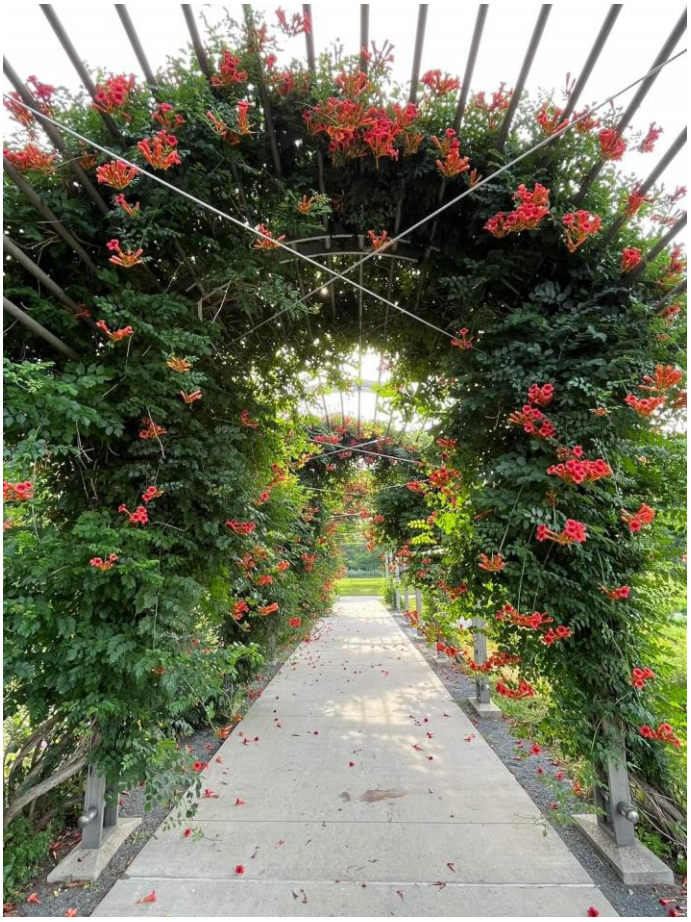
Spring Issue 2025

OPTIONS

Newsletter of the Independent Living Resource Centre (Manitoba)



Spring Issue

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Created/Edited through the ILRC Options Newsletter Committee. The views and opinions expressed in this edition are those of the original authors and other contributors. These views and opinions do not necessarily represent those of ILRC

From the Soapbox

John Young

I believe that spring can outshine some of the negative situations happening in the world today.

It might sound like a simple thought—a seasonal reflection, even a cliché. But for many in Manitoba's disability community, those words carry weight. After years marked by isolation, uncertainty, and systemic neglect, spring doesn't just mean warmer weather. It means something deeper: renewal, resistance, and visibility.

The past four or five years have been tough—globally and locally. From the pandemic to the growing spread of misinformation, we've been living in a time where truth feels slippery. In Manitoba, this has shown up in how information is shared—or not shared—when it comes to disability supports. Policies shift. Programs stall. People are left wondering: *Whose information counts? Who's making the decisions? And where do we even go to get answers?*

These aren't new questions for people with disabilities. They're daily ones. The real issue isn't just the lack of answers—it's that the answers, when they come, are rarely shaped with a client- or consumer-centred lens. Decisions about accessible housing, employment opportunities, or attendant care programs are often made behind closed doors, with little input from those actually impacted.

In Manitoba, this is especially visible in programs like Community-Directed Attendant Care, which continue to operate under outdated funding models that ignore the inflation and cost of living reality. Transportation, too, remains a barrier. Para-transit delays, inaccessible vehicles-for-hire, and rural service gaps all keep people isolated—especially during the winter months when mobility is at its lowest.

That's why spring matters.

With the snow melting and sidewalks clearing, more people with disabilities can leave their homes. They can get to community events. They can speak up and be seen. It's more than just mobility—it's about presence. And after months of being stuck inside, physically or metaphorically, that presence means power.

Spring and summer in Manitoba offer a chance to reconnect. To gather in parks, attend rallies, take meetings in-person again. They allow us to share our ideas, tell our stories, and push for change in a way that winter often doesn't allow.

But here's the thing: while spring feels like a fresh start, it's also familiar. The issues haven't gone away. The systems haven't transformed. As one community advocate put it, *"Spring is truly the beginning of the new beginning of the same old."*

That phrase hits hard. It captures the bittersweet truth that, yes, there's hope and energy and momentum—but we're still fighting many of the same battles we've been fighting for decades. Accessibility. Inclusion. Equity. Fair funding. Policy transparency.

Still, we welcome the warmth. Because it helps us move. It helps us gather. And it helps us speak.

In Manitoba, spring isn't just a season. It's a signal: the work continues—and so do we.

Board Corner

Sharon Olson

I have a different perspective on disability. For me, having a disability has presented me with new opportunities in life. This perception stems from the numerous organizations and remarkable individuals I have encountered within the disability community. While living with disabilities can be challenging, I have come to embrace and love myself more as I have grown older. Rather than fixating on the pain, I strive to find humour and joy in my daily life. These connections and experiences have enriched my journey, making it a unique and fulfilling one.

For those seeking support and resources, organizations like the Independent Living Resource Centre in Winnipeg offer invaluable assistance to individuals with disabilities. I have been a member of the ILRC for many years. They provide a range of services, from advocacy and information to direct support, supporting people to live more independently. Connecting with such organizations can lead to discovering a supportive community and access to tools that enhance quality of life.

Pickleball and Disability: A Match Made in Manitoba?

Doug Lockhart

No, this isn't a story about getting injured while playing pickleball—though that's certainly a common enough occurrence. If you read our last article, you'll know that the Independent Living Resource Centre (ILRC) is championing new ways to help people remain in their homes through our **Family Caregiver Training Program**. That led us to some deeper reflection: Who are we really trying to reach?

In exploring our target audience for a marketing plan, we stumbled across an unexpected yet perfect connection. The fastest-growing sport in North America is pickleball—and the majority of players are seniors aged 55 and up. Why does that matter?

Well, here's the connection: there's a growing number of seniors acquiring disabilities who want to continue living independently in their own homes. Naturally, their caregivers often come from the same age group—exactly the demographic found on the pickleball courts. That realization sparked an idea: what if our next outreach vehicle was already waiting, paddles in hand?

Our team—myself and three colleagues—dug into this idea. Two of us are persons with disabilities, and all of us are connected personally and professionally to disability

advocacy. So we decided to sponsor a team of amateur pickleball players. The sponsorship covered registration fees, with players wearing ILRC-branded uniforms at tournaments.

And it worked.

Not only did it create buzz about Manitoba's first-ever sponsorship of amateur pickleball athletes, but it also sparked real curiosity about what ILRC is and why we're involved in the sport. In just three tournaments, our team earned one gold, one silver, and one bronze medal, plus two qualifying spots for the 55+ Canada Games in Quebec City in 2024.

It turns out pickleball might just be the perfect way to raise awareness—promoting independence, connecting with caregivers, and spotlighting the supports we offer at ILRC.

We're proud to announce that ILRC will sponsor another team in 2025. Stay tuned for updates, and in the meantime, join us in cheering on our team for another amazing year ahead!

The Remarkable Life of Ibelin and Digital Connections

Robert Mitchell

Netflix's *The Remarkable Life of Ibelin*, directed by Benjamin Ree, dives deep into the life of Mats Steen, a young Norwegian man with Duchenne muscular dystrophy, who found purpose and connection through his online alter ego, Ibelin, in *World of Warcraft* (WoW). This documentary serves as a thought-provoking commentary on digital identities, showing how online platforms can provide spaces for personal growth, friendship, and even therapeutic support. Mats' journey offers a case study on how digital interactions can help individuals, especially those with limited physical access to social spaces, form authentic connections and lasting impacts.

Public opinion often questions the value of digital interactions, seeing them as a distraction from "real life." I myself am a steadfast gamer and have been ever since I was very young. I played WoW for years, often with friends locally or with people I had met online across the United States and Europe. I may not have considered these distant connections *friends*, but merely acquaintances with whom we shared a common interest and goal.

However, *The Remarkable Life of Ibelin* challenges this notion. The online world of Azeroth allowed Mats to build a close circle of friends and to live a life beyond any physical limitations. Mats' parents were deeply moved by the outpouring of support from his WoW friends after his passing, showcasing the

profound impact these connections had on him and vice versa.

One of the documentary's strengths is how it portrays Mats' online community as a source of empathy and support, underscoring the unique friendships that can arise in digital spaces. As Ibelin, Mats experienced joy, companionship, and community recognition—qualities by his own admission and blogs, that were often elusive in his offline world. The WoW community's tribute, both in-game and in the film, shows that online connections can provide solace and purpose for people of all abilities. Mats' story is also indicative of the therapeutic power of online interaction. His parents eventually understood that WoW gave him joy and fulfillment, reframing their view of digital spaces as valuable extensions of reality rather than mere escapes. The documentary resonates with broader mental health discussions, where online platforms increasingly offer people a sense of control, companionship, and purpose, particularly for those facing isolation due to physical or geographic limitations.

Despite the film's praises, *The Remarkable Life of Ibelin* has faced some critiques. Critics, especially from the disability community, feel the documentary at times idealizes Mats' online life without fully addressing the complex, offline realities of living with a disability. While the film effectively highlights Mats' resilience, it sometimes overlooks the nuanced struggles he faced beyond his virtual persona, Ibelin. Moreover, Ree's extensive use of WoW animations—though immersive—sometimes detracts from emotional moments. A balance of more real-world interviews and scenes with Mats' family might have better anchored the narrative, adding depth to viewers' understanding of Mats' life beyond the screen.

The Remarkable Life of Ibelin offers a heartfelt examination of digital life, showing that online worlds are not simply places of escapism but platforms where true connection, resilience, and empathy flourish. This story of Mats Steen reminds us of the inclusive potential of online spaces to positively shape lives—particularly for those limited by physical or social constraints.

The film might have done a better job of balancing the portrayal of Mats' digital legacy and addressing the nuanced reality of his experience as a young person with a physical disability. It definitely challenges us to rethink the boundaries between digital and physical spaces. Ultimately, I respect the filmmaker's desire to portray a digital community as an authentic demonstration of human connection across time and cultures, across geography and, in this sense, across fantasy worlds.

The Remarkable Life of Ibelin is streaming now on Netflix.

5 Things to Do this Spring in Winnipeg

Kyle Jackson

Spring in Winnipeg is like a breath of fresh air—literally. After months of snow and cold, the city comes alive with color, energy, and endless opportunities to get outside and explore. Whether you're a local or a visitor, Winnipeg offers an array of parks, galleries, and riverside trails that are as welcoming as they are accessible. Here are five fun, inclusive activities to enjoy this spring in Winnipeg.

1. **Stroll Through Assiniboine Park and the English Garden**
   Assiniboine Park is a springtime gem. The English Garden comes to life with blooming tulips, daffodils, and vibrant greenery—perfect for a peaceful walk or picnic. Don't miss the Leo Mol Sculpture Garden for a unique artistic touch. The park is fully accessible, with paved pathways for wheelchairs and strollers, accessible parking, and plenty of benches for resting. The nearby Assiniboine Park Zoo is also wheelchair-friendly, with smooth paths and ramp access throughout.

2. **Wander The Forks National Historic Site**
   The Forks is where culture, community, and nature meet. Located at the junction of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, it's a lively spot featuring outdoor markets, food vendors, riverside trails, and often live music. The entire area is designed with accessibility in mind, including wide paved paths, accessible washrooms, designated parking, and bike racks. Families will appreciate the nearby Manitoba Children's Museum, which also offers accessible features for all visitors.

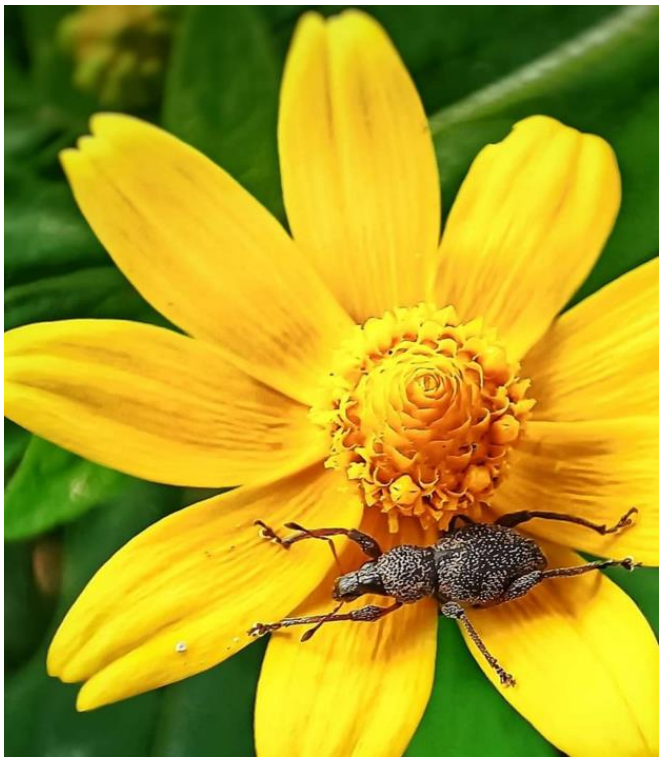
3. **Discover the Winnipeg Art Gallery and Qaumajuq**
   Art lovers will find inspiration at the Winnipeg Art Gallery (WAG) and its stunning Qaumajuq Inuit Art Centre. This state-of-the-art facility houses one of the world's largest collections of contemporary Inuit art. It's fully accessible, with ramps, elevators, and sensory-friendly hours for visitors with sensory sensitivities. Centrally located and easy to reach by public transit, the gallery also provides ample seating and quiet spaces for rest and reflection.

4. **Ride or Roll Along the Assiniboine Riverwalk**
   Winnipeg's spring weather is ideal for a scenic bike ride or stroll along the 5.5 km Assiniboine Riverwalk. This peaceful path follows the riverbank with smooth, flat terrain perfect for cycling, walking, or using a wheelchair. Don't have a bike? Bike Winnipeg offers rentals, including adaptive bikes for riders with mobility needs. It's a beautiful way to enjoy nature and take in the city from a new perspective.

5. **Plan Ahead for the Winnipeg Folk Festival**
   While the Winnipeg Folk Festival happens in July, spring is the perfect time to grab your tickets and start planning. Held at Birds Hill Park, this iconic event features incredible live music, food vendors, artisan markets, and a welcoming community vibe. The festival prioritizes accessibility, with designated seating, paved paths, accessible parking, and shuttle

services for those with mobility challenges. Quieter zones are also available for guests who prefer a calm space away from the crowd.

Whether you're chasing tulips, tunes, or trail time, spring in Winnipeg is full of inclusive adventures waiting to be had. So get out there, soak up the sunshine, and make the most of everything this vibrant city has to offer!



Smooth Sailing: Preparing for Another Season on the Water

With Contributions from Eleanor Reimer

Able Sail provides exhilarating and inclusive sailing experiences for Manitobans of all ages and abilities, thanks to our enthusiastic staff and the dedication of our long-time coordinators. As we prepare for the 2025 season, let's reflect on the successes that make this program so unique and vital to the community.

Spotlight on Our Coordinator: Enhancing Participant Experiences

Nick Bailey, our coordinator, has been with the program for nearly seven years and plays a crucial role in creating a welcoming, safe environment for sailing. "We continually ask consumers and their staff for suggestions to make their sailing experience as comfortable as possible," he explains. "This can mean adding cushions in the boat or bringing their attendant out on the water with them during their sail."

One of the most significant impacts of our program is offering a leisure activity to people who may feel isolated or weren't aware sailing was an option. "Our program gives people the opportunity to discover a leisure activity they might not have thought was accessible," Nick shares. Hearing stories from participants has deepened his appreciation for the program's value. "The program means a lot to me … one of my favourite experiences has been being able to listen to the stories that our consumers have, like participating in the Mobility Cup as a companion sailor."

Reflections from New Staff: Fresh Perspectives and Enthusiasm

New staff members emphasize the importance of empathy, patience, and adaptability in ensuring a positive experience for all participants. "The most important qualities for working in an accessible sports program are compassion, enthusiasm, and open-mindedness," one new staff member reflects. They are committed to maintaining open communication and continuously

adapting based on feedback to meet each participant's unique needs.

Our staff are also excited by the “opportunities to learn new things in a new environment,” and appreciate being able to “give consumers a new opportunity for leisure.” Able Sail program participants often note how relaxing and freeing it is to be on the water, even if they have never been on a boat before! Hoping consumers take away “a sense of satisfaction and community,” our staff are committed to making the sailing experience a memorable one.

The Benefits of Able Sail: Freedom, Confidence, and Joy

Able Sail provides participants with more than just sailing lessons. It offers an opportunity to build confidence, self-esteem, and independence. "Sailing with Able Sail helps participants experience freedom and relaxation, fostering social connections and bringing joy to their lives," one new staff member notes. This inclusive recreational activity allows participants to engage with a supportive community, and who doesn’t want to enjoy our short Winnipeg summers out on the water? We hope you join us!

Tech Corner

Jason Hirose

In case you haven’t heard, Microsoft will officially end support for Windows 10 on October 14, 2025. This creates a challenge for many users, as Windows 11 has stricter system requirements, meaning a lot of perfectly functional laptops and desktops won’t qualify for the upgrade.

What Does "End of Support" Mean?

When support ends, Microsoft will stop providing security updates, bug fixes, and technical support for Windows 10. That’s a big deal—since Windows is one of the most widely used operating systems, it’s a major target for hackers, viruses, and malware. Without regular updates, your computer becomes more vulnerable.

It’s not just Microsoft, either. Once support ends, other software companies may also stop supporting Windows 10, meaning it could become difficult to find up-to-date browsers, antivirus software, or even word processors for your machine.

What Are Your Options?

1. Check if your PC can run Windows 11
Some users will see a pop-up prompting them to upgrade. If not, you can download Microsoft’s PC Health Check app to verify if your system is compatible:
https://aka.ms/GetPCHealthCheckApp
If your system qualifies, the upgrade is usually free.

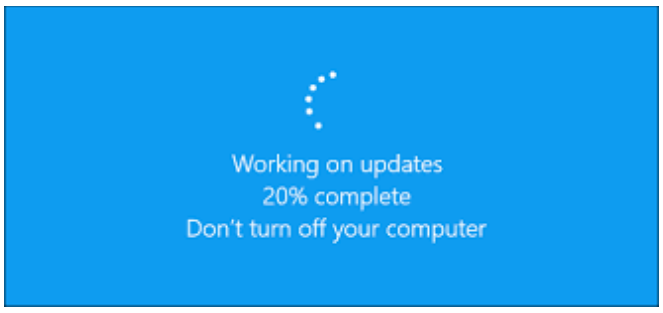
2. Consider a new (or New-to-You) computer.
If your PC isn’t compatible, you may need to replace it. The key requirement for Windows 11 is a processor (CPU) released after 2018. Many retailers label whether a computer is

“Windows 11 ready,” and buying a refurbished system is also a budget-friendly option.

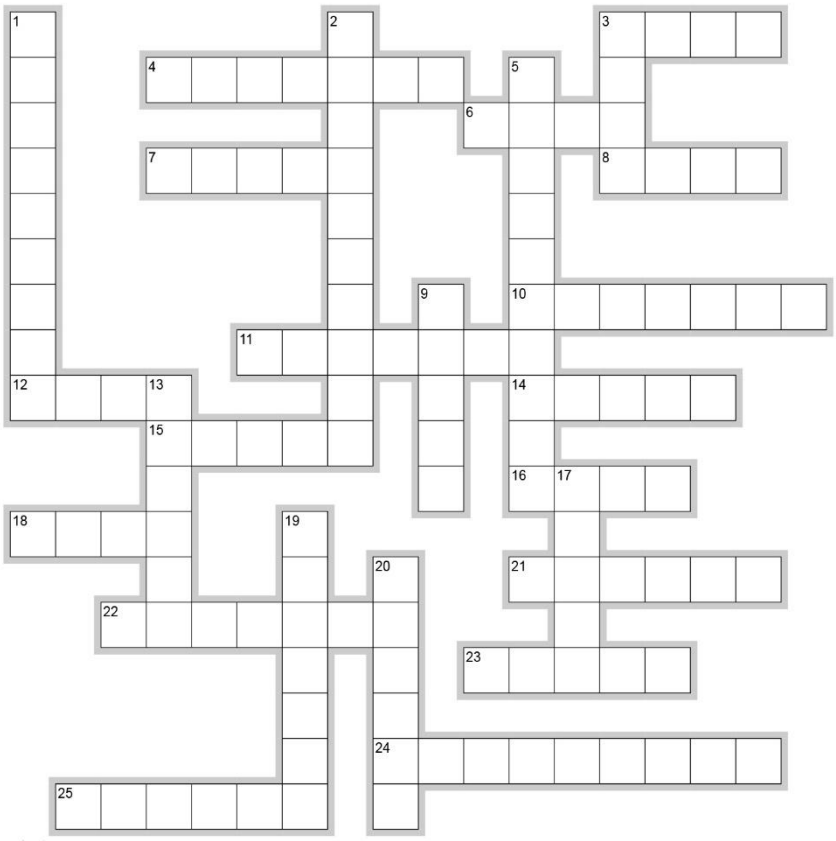
3. Use Microsoft’s Extended Security Updates (ESU)
If replacing your computer isn’t possible right now, Microsoft is offering a one-year Extended Security Updates program for $30 USD. It will keep your Windows 10 system protected for one additional year starting October 2025. After that, the only option will be to upgrade.

4. Disconnect from the Internet
If none of the above options work for you, consider using your Windows 10 computer offline only. While not ideal for everyone, this significantly reduces your risk of infection or compromise, since most threats come through internet access.

Why Is This Happening? Microsoft has delayed ending support for Windows 10 in the past, but this time it’s moving forward. Why? Newer systems have advanced security features built directly into the hardware, which older machines can’t support. Ending Windows 10 is part of Microsoft’s effort to improve overall security—but it’s understandably frustrating for those happy with their current system or unable to afford a new one.



Spring Crossword



Across

3. Ramp alternative
4. Device for grabbing things just out of...reach
6. The 'nomics of gentle use
7. Common colour for #16
8. Sip and ___
10. For securing a seeing eye dog
11. Tactile writing system
12. Needed to make a non-ground level entrance accessible
14. Ceiling ___ (for lifting and moving, in the bedroom, e.g.)
15. First name in lifts
16. Support for walking or perceiving barriers
18. Popular screen reading software not named for a scary shark
21. Fuzzy and sticky stuff with a million uses
22. Mobile toilet
23. Prosthetic eyes might be made out of this material
24. Adaptive bicycle, e.g.
25. Frame with four legs to help with standing and mobile

Down

1. For reading the fine print
2. Power or manual, e.g.
3. System that transmits sound directly to hearing aids
5. A replacement for a missing limb
9. Fabric wrap for lifting and moving one's body, maybe with a lift?
13. Exercise routine for maintaining mobility
17. Amazonian assistant
19. Motorized device for personal mobility
20. Some blankets might need a bit extra for support

PACE

PERSONAL ATTENDANT COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Employable skills today
Experience for a lifetime

Start your career as an
Independent Living Attendant

PACE is a recognized training program designed and delivered by the disability community. Get job ready with the vital skills needed to make a real difference!

personal care * home management
communication * mental health * diet/nutrition,
body movement * workplace safety
assistive devices * emergency management
wound care * community accessibility

We Have Choices!

PACE 2025 Schedule

Personal Attendant Community Education (PACE) trains able-bodied persons to become Independent Living Attendants (ILA's) for people with disabilities. PACE is a recognized curriculum, developed, designed and delivered by people with disabilities to promote consumer choice and control in daily decisions that impact their lives. Follow-up surveys indicate over 90% success rate in obtaining employment in this field following graduation. The training is five weeks long. It runs Monday to Friday with classes from 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM daily. Community training hours are early morning, afternoon and late evening.

We are currently taking applications for any of the following sessions in 2025:

Session Dates Registration Deadline

Session 121: April 22nd – May 23rd Monday, April 14/25

Session 122: June 9th – July 11th Monday, June 2/25

Session 123: September 8th – Oct 10th Tuesday, Sept 2 2/25

Session 124: November 3rd – Dec 5th Monday, October 27/25

100 - 167 Lombard Ave.

(Main Floor of the Grain Exchange Building)

Please contact Natalie at: 204-947-0194 or

e – mail at nataliep@ilrc.mb.ca

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Your membership helps support newsletter distribution. Being a member has its benefits in that you can vote at our next annual meeting and receive exclusive invitations to community events. If you have not renewed your membership, please do so. The cost is **$5.00.**

Please inform us about the following:
___ **New Member**
___ **Renewal**
___ **I prefer not to receive any mailings from ILRC.**

Name: _____

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Romeo Recalde

Disability Awareness Resource Training (DART) /Community Outreach

Patrick Stewart, Jason Hirose, Cherie-Lou Bagro

Personal Attendant Community Education Program (PACE)

Natalie Pirson

And many volunteers and members who support ILRC daily. We greatly appreciate these members of the **community team!**