



THE DISABILITY FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

# DISCOVER

Spring 2021

## COURAGE TO COME BACK AWARD WINNER CONTINUES MUSICAL EXPLORATION

**Born in Russia during the 60s**, Mark and his family immigrated to Canada where his musical palate grew outside the censored music systems he was used to. At the age of 15, he swiftly took to playing the guitar and bass and cites Geddy Lee of Rush and Paul McCartney as major influences. After studying under legendary bassist Rene Worst, Mark spent part of the 1990s touring across North America opening for major acts including Blue Oyster Cult and Mr. Big.

In 2001 Mark's life took a drastic turn when he was in a car accident that left him with a serious brain injury, rendering him unable to walk, speak or care for himself. He recalls, "...most of my muscles weren't receiving proper signals, especially my fine motor skills. I couldn't speak, could barely walk or use my hands and had trouble swallowing. Everyone thought it was all over for me. At the time I would have preferred death. You know, when you really start thinking about death, that's when you learn to appreciate life."

After months of therapy at **GF Strong Rehabilitation Centre** in Vancouver, Mark was placed in a group home where his prognosis was that he would never be independent again. This is when Mark began to take his recovery into his own hands. It was a long, slow, grueling, strenuous, frustrating, and demoralizing process. After a few years of seeing very little progress, Mark started educating himself on how the body works, specifically the brain and neuroplasticity.

"When I couldn't do much, I listened to music," he says, recalling how he spent his time devouring every genre of music he could find. Through hard work, perseverance and "becoming my own doctor," Mark began to see progress in his recovery.



Mark Ash, Graeme Wyman, and Dave Symington rehearse for Mark's upcoming Strong X Virtual Concert Series performance.

It was during this time that he discovered **Vancouver Adapted Music Society (VAMS)**, a non-profit supported by the Disability Foundation and that creates opportunities for musicians with disabilities to explore their musical passions. While going to the gym at GF Strong, "I couldn't speak very well but I knew music and I had some recordings and they accepted me." He recorded "For Your love" for the VAMS Straight Goods CD, saying that "It was a great boost for me."

Mark's dedication and perseverance to his recovery, as well as his work facilitating the **Wellness Through Music Program** with Pathways Clubhouse, led to him receiving a **Courage to Come Back Award** in 2010.

Since 2009, with help from VAMS, Mark has been working on many projects, writing in various musical genres, and performing throughout the Lower Mainland. On March 12th, Mark's performance as part of the **Strong X Virtual Concert Series** was released through the VAMS website and on social media. Check out Mark's show on the [Disability Foundation's YouTube channel](#).



Nicolas Haddad works the cash register at Zaatar W. Zeit in Vancouver on International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

## INDIVIDUAL INSPIRING BUSINESSES TO GIVE RAISES \$8,335 IN SUPPORT OF CONNECTRA

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, isolation, disconnection, as well as diminished disability support services have greatly impacted the lives and well-being of the 6.2 million Canadians living with a disability. "The time to address these issues is now," says Nicolas Haddad, a **ConnecTra** Board member, business analyst, and triple amputee who led a third-party fundraising campaign on December 3rd for **International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPWD)**. As a "connecting organization", ConnecTra has committed to supporting those facing these consequences of the pandemic, especially through virtual programs like **ConnecTogether**.

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When conceiving of the idea for his fundraiser, he called upon his business analyst background to implement his plan, like using *pointage*, a French word which translates to *checking off* or *scrutinizing*, when developing the list of people that he wanted to include in his campaign. Nicolas started with those in his network, including family and friends, who are supportive of inclusion, of him on a personal level what he is advocating for.

Nicolas engaged local businesses **FarmersMeal, RAM Engineering, Perk Hero, Costen Catbalue and Zaatw Zeit** to help promote and support his initiative. Disability Foundation staff worked with Nicolas to promote the campaign through social media and with media partners to ensure his supporters were recognized for their contributions.

Leading up to **IDPWD**, Nicolas asked people to share videos of themselves performing day-to-day tasks like cooking using only one hand. On December 3rd, he arranged to help as a cashier at **Zaatw Zeit**, and thanks to an agreement with the restaurant, encouraged customers to participate in the initiative. For every bill paid using only one hand, 10% was donated to ConneCTra and accompanied by additional donations from the businesses and many other generous supporters of Nicolas' efforts.

By the end of the campaign, **Nicolas raised \$8,335** for ConneCTra's programs and services. Everyone at ConneCTra and throughout the Disability Foundation network is grateful for Nicolas' support both as a showing the way as a fundraising champion and his leadership on the ConneCTra Board of Directors. **Thanks Nicolas!**



Nicolas Haddad and owner of Zaatw Zeit during Nick's International Day of Persons with Disabilities fundraiser. (Photographer: Ermin Badzak, Badzak Creative)

ABOUT THIRD-PARTY FUNDRAISING

**Fundraisers like Nicolas** help the Disability Foundation and our affiliated Societies work towards our mandate of empowering people with disabilities to "re-imagine what is possible". Fundraising ideas can be as simple as a Facebook campaign, or more complex like sporting events or work giving challenges. The possibilities are endless!

**Want to host your own?** No matter your goal, we can help you with planning and presenting your third-party fundraising campaign and have created a page of resources to help you get started. Visit [www.disabilityfoundation.org/third-party-fundraising/](http://www.disabilityfoundation.org/third-party-fundraising/) for more information.

If you have an idea that you would like to discuss with us, fill out our Third Party Application form and send it to [info@disabilityfoundation.org](mailto:info@disabilityfoundation.org)



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