

BRIDGES-OVER-BARRIERS

CELEBRATING OUR DVD AND BOOK!!

I am an autistic man. I cannot speak with my voice, but through Supported Typing I have found a voice for my thoughts, hopes and fears. I love words and compose what my friends call poetry.

A bridge is my image of how S-T can connect my island to the mainland society and overcome my frustrations in being misunderstood and not in control of my life. I make choices about everything that affects me. I have an excellent life: my motto is: "I am host in my home; I am whole and have hope." I have been inspired by my joy in working with Beth, my communication partner from 2000.

Since January 2004, I have hosted a support group for communication. Friends who do not speak reliably because of neuro-motor disabilities come from all over southern Ontario for monthly gatherings in Guelph.

Groups like ours are rare because we have been assumed not to have thoughts or feelings and we have not been educated or supported to express ourselves. Most of us have been isolated and excluded. S-T is very hard. It strains our bodies and minds. But it is all we have. So it is good to do it and we are glad we can. The experience of sharing our struggles and strategies, gave us the idea of Bridges-Over-Barriers as a name and a vision of a way to help others who have no voices. We think that seeing and hearing us through our DVD will help more people to understand. I had the idea of the book—I called it a narralogue—which explains a bit more.

From mid-2005, I have been passionate about my vision of a Bridges Centre as a place of refuge and organization for communication and life planning where people who do not speak because of Autism etc can come together to share support ideas and community. The way ahead is still not clear or easy for people who type to talk because they cannot speak with their voices, especially in Canada. But in 2010 we may see some signs of hope that other people are getting the message.

Through our book and DVD we want to share our thoughts and ideas on how we live in this world. This DVD will open your mind to different ways to communicate and if you listen you will enjoy. We can be misunderstood if people don't listen.

Our needs and dreams are big, big, big! Each of us has very individual needs which we can describe using S-T. The kinds of lives we shape for ourselves, understanding our options and making decisions with S-T, must suit our unique personalities, abilities and circumstances. Some of us still have to sort out our priorities and convince the people in our lives that our voices really matter in all choices that affect us.

Please share our message with anyone who could benefit or help. And please consider giving to Bridges to help us with our further steps of enabling everyone to get their voice. The last chapter of the book outlines our vision and plans for a Bridges centre. Contact details for how to order more copies of the book/DVD and how to give to Bridges are given overpage.

– Andrew Bloomfield

BRIDGES-OVER-BARRIERS IN OUR OWN WORDS

The DVD consists of two main parts—a series of conversations about the importance of Supported Typing in coping with Autism and planning our own lives (23.25 minutes), and eight participant profiles in which most of us introduce ourselves (18 minutes). Our families and friends have supported our typing and some have spoken our words for the DVD. We are thankful to everyone who took part in the conversations at our gatherings and in making the DVD:

Wonderful friends and allies have helped us in this project—especially our videographer Christine Zorn. Deborah Seabrook, music therapist, composed and played the theme music. Christine also interested some of her friends and colleagues to contribute to our project.

**Bridges-Over-Barriers [electronic resource] :
in our own words**

**Andrew Bloomfield, script writer & editor,
narrator, founder of Bridges**
**Christine Zorn, PAN Video Services Inc. video
producer & director / camera & video editor**
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1. Autism spectrum disorders--Patients--Ontario--Guelph--Biography.
I. Bloomfield, Andrew, 1968-
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Contributors using Supported Typing, a form of AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication) were supported to type, and their words were spoken, by family members and friends:

The book accompanies the DVD and is almost all in our own words. The book has 112 pages in six chapters:

- Our Community of Communicators
- Recognizing Our Needs to Express Ourselves and Our Rights to be Heard
- What It's Like to Live with Autism: Understanding our Movement Differences
- Let's Talk about Our Senses
- Sharing Struggles and Strategies to Improve Our Lives
- The Bridges Dream: Sustaining our Hopes

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- Kevin Vasey with Gloria Pearson-Vasey and Jim Vasey
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- John Morris-Dadson with Anne Morris-Dadson and Paul Morris-Dadson
- Ken Moon with Maebeth Moon and Doug Moon
- Tim Marmura with Elizabeth Marmura and Lea Tran
- Matt MacDonald with Jacquie Ferguson
- Sara Lyne with Judi Henry
- John Crawley with Tara Houser
- Andrew Bloomfield with Beth Komito-Gottlieb, David DeVidi and Jane Forgay
- Ingrid Clark: Narrator of introductory and concluding passages composed by Kevin Vasey and Andrew Bloomfield
- Deborah Seabrook: musical composition and performance.
- Andrew McPherson and Brian Ward lent the use of their recording studios.
- Scenes include The Ignatius Jesuit Centre of Guelph and The Guelph Enabling Garden.

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