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New scholarship designed to enhance inclusiveness on University of Lethbridge campus

Nadine and Don Chandler have advocated for inclusiveness ever since their son Randy was born with an intellectual disability more than 40 years ago, and now they've established an award that will help provide inclusive learning opportunities at the University of Lethbridge.

“Three or four years ago, our son was one of eight individuals with disabilities involved in a drama and dance course at the U of L through former drama professor Lisa Doolittle,” says Don (BASC (BA) '73). “As a result of this very successful program, we wanted to do something to enable future intellectually disabled individuals to have an opportunity to attend courses at the University. We had been thinking about establishing a scholarship for some time and our son’s participation in that course affirmed our decision.”



The Chandler Family Award is a two-part endowment. The Chandler Family Inclusion Fund will assist students with developmental or intellectual disabilities or an academic staff member who enables the participation of these individuals in the University community. If there are no applicants to the Fund, the annual proceeds go to support the Chandler Family Inclusion Award, which is given to an undergraduate or graduate student who has shown outstanding leadership in the areas of developmental or intellectual disability or who has shown initiative to improve the lives of these individuals.

“Randy had an outstanding experience,” adds Nadine. “He very much enjoyed the whole process. He enjoyed being involved in the university classroom; he received a mark and was very proud of his accomplishments. It was a positive, rewarding experience all around.”

Many of the people who could be involved in the university experience at some level can't participate because of the tuition costs.

"We wanted to create opportunities that wouldn't otherwise be there," says Don, past president of the U of L Alumni Association (2009-2011) and a 2005 inductee into the Alumni Honour Society.

Maggie MacKay, 20, was the first recipient of the award. She has audited several courses, with an assistant, in the Faculty of Fine Arts, including a drama course in movement and a stagecraft course about the technical side of theatre productions.

"I liked making masks and I drew a Snow-White set design," says Maggie. "I enjoyed it."

Her parents, Bruce (BASC (BA) '84) and Flora (BASC (BA) '85) MacKay, say her participation in university life is about much more than earning credits.

"Maggie is an intelligent young woman and she's continuing to learn academically," says Flora. "We don't expect she will get a university degree; it's more the experience of interacting and socializing with her peers, navigating around campus and developing confidence. She's learned a lot."

"The gift is a wonderful way for the Chandler family to support people like Maggie and others to have this experience at university but it's also an encouragement for the University to implement programming or a system to make it possible," says Bruce.

When asked if she'd like to take more classes, Maggie says simply, "Yes, I'd love to."

To view online: <http://www.uleth.ca/unews/article/creating-more-inclusive-campus>

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