



NEWS RELEASE

www.penticton.ca

For immediate release

Community Medal Bearer revealed for Rick Hansen Relay

April 10, 2012

PENTICTON – The City of Penticton is proud to announce that resident Amanda Lewis will be the final community medal bearer during the last leg of the Rick Hansen 25th Anniversary Relay into Penticton on May 3.

“Amanda is incredibly deserving of the community medal bearer title,” said Lori Mullin, City of Penticton Recreation Supervisor. “She embodies the spirit of Rick Hansen’s Man in Motion Tour, and is an inspiration to us all.”

Beginning on Aug. 24, 2011 on the easternmost point of North America at Cape Spear, Nfld., the Rick Hansen 25th Anniversary Relay began the process of retracing the Canadian segment of the original Man in Motion Tour. This time, however, the Man in Motion would be represented and celebrated by many in motion; engaging 7,000 participants from across Canada who have made a difference in the lives of others. These individuals were selected as community medal bearers to run, walk, wheel or bike their segments into local celebrations in their respective communities.

The Penticton Relay Community Planning Team issued a call for nominations last fall, seeking “difference makers” throughout the area willing to not only take part in the Relay but be catalysts for positive change. Twenty-three-year-old Amanda – a long-time volunteer, passionate advocate and motivational speaker – was selected.

“Rick Hansen is an amazing role model, not just for people with special needs, but anybody,” Amanda said. “He was the one who championed the idea that it doesn’t matter what obstacles stand in your way, you can do whatever you dream of and what you set your mind to. He’s a personal hero of mine because of that.

“I am so honoured to be part of this Relay connected to this wonderful man, who has made such a difference.”

Katie Bowling was selected as the medal bearer for the first leg on Saturday, May 5, when the Relay will depart the community from the Penticton Farmers Market. In addition to working for the United Way, Katie is long-time community volunteer who has been recognized with the Duke of Edinburgh Young Canadians Award. She will also serve as Amanda’s alternate, should the need arise.

The Rick Hansen 25th Anniversary Relay will travel through more than 600 communities as it makes its nine-month, 12,000-km journey across Canada before concluding in Vancouver on May 22.

Details of the May 3 celebration in Penticton scheduled to mark the arrival of the Relay will be released in the coming weeks. Amanda says she hopes the community marks the date on its calendar so they can take part in the planned activities.

“It’s a day and an event for people to be proud of and for everybody, regardless of physical abilities or societal barriers, to come together and celebrate our community and this Canadian role model,” she says. “I think it fits with my personal credo: The impossible isn’t impossible, it just takes a little longer.”

For more information about the Rick Hansen 25th Anniversary Relay, visit www.rickhansenrelay.com.

- 30 -

To contact Amanda Lewis, Katie Bowling or Lori Mullin for interviews, contact:
Simone Blais, Communications Officer
250-490-2583
simone.blais@penticton.ca



Biography of Amanda Lewis

Amanda Lewis was born with spastic quadriplegic cerebral palsy, and has used a wheelchair for mobility for as long as she can remember. She has undergone 10 surgeries. In addition, she has a congenital amputation of her right arm. She began using a power-chair at the age of two, much to her parents' amazement, and has not slowed down since.

"From pretty much the day I was born, I've never operated under the words, "No or Slow,"" Amanda says, noting her parents have always supported her endeavors and instilled in her the drive to reach for her goals. "I'm very, very determined.

"I consider my disability to be a huge blessing. It enables me to see the world differently, and take the time where others may not have the opportunity. I've been fortunate enough to meet so many wonderful people – I have so many special people in my life – they are all the biggest gift. I have been given so many wonderful opportunities because of my situation that I wouldn't otherwise have had."

Her family moved to Penticton when she was five. Amanda says her parents taught her the importance of giving back to others and the community.

"Penticton has always felt like home. It's such a small, inter-connected community, which is so wonderful," she says. "When I was growing up, there were so many people there supporting and helping us, I have always felt that I wanted to give back and I wanted to make a difference for other people and hopefully make their way a little easier."

Amanda has been a member of the Agur Lake Camp Society board since 2007. The mandate of the Agur Lake Camp Society is to establish a barrier-free wilderness camp and recreational facility for children and adults with special needs and their families. She currently holds the titles of resource advisor and speakers' bureau chair. In addition, Amanda sits on the operations committee. She supports the camp's model of not only helping individuals with disabilities, but their families as well. "From personal experience, I knew what a difference that would make," she says.

Her involvement with Agur Lake Camp has inspired her to pursue a career in motivational speaking and advocacy for people with special needs. Since graduating from Princess Margaret Secondary School in 2006, Amanda has embarked upon business studies at Okanagan College to build her skills. In addition to being a student for the last five years, she has been an Okanagan College instructor as well: Amanda leads a two-day workshop for certified educational assistant program students called *Beyond the Disability There Is Me*. The workshop reveals her experiences in the school system to those looking to embark upon a career working with special needs students. "A textbook can only take them so far," she explains.

She has also written a book of poetry, entitled *One*, which serves as a partial fundraiser for Agur Lake Camp.