

# ACCESS

## BRITISH COLUMBIA

July - September 2004

### First Class Facility for Marine Mammals

by Lauren Usui

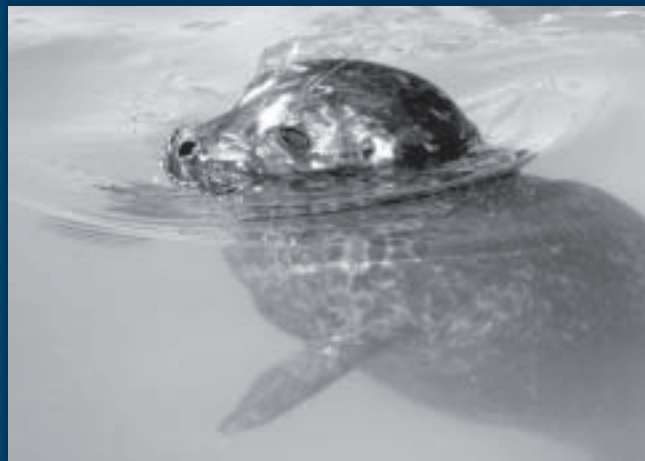
Along British Columbia's coast, there are those that care for the ill, injured or abandoned. Their patients are given expert treatment and supportive care to recuperate before being discharged back into their natural environment – the ocean.

The slippery, wet patients of the **Vancouver Aquarium's Marine Mammal Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre** are commonly smaller mammals such as harbour seals, but the rescue and care for other marine mammals such as elephant seals, sea otters, sea lions, porpoises, dolphins and killer whales are also part of the Centre's operations.

The Marine Mammal Rescue and Rehabilitation Program at the Vancouver Aquarium Marine Science Centre has been involved with the rescue and rehabilitation of marine animals since 1960. Currently, the program cares for about 50 distressed marine mammals a year and is expecting over 40 animals to be rescued and rehabilitated in 2004.

In 2002, the Vancouver Aquarium helped save Springer, a young killer whale found in poor health and separated from her family pod. The rescue program raised significant funds to help successfully reunite Springer with her pod. Similarly, the Centre established a fund in 2004 to help reunite another killer whale, Luna, with his pod.

The Centre runs without operational support from government and relies heavily on volunteers and donations from the public.



*The baby harbour seal (top) was rescued thanks to the Vancouver Aquarium Marine Mammal Rescue and Rehabilitation Program. Socrates (bottom) was also rescued and has now been released.*

*Top photo courtesy of Dave Morgan.*

*Continued on back page*

## Program Benefits Disabled

by Carla Shore

Robyn Beckman had been looking for a way to earn an income with her computer during the six years she had collected disability, but the former advertising rep had no one to teach her. Then she heard about the **Internet Business Development for Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program** created by the **Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) of Central Kootenay**.

"It was the answer to six years of praying," says Beckman. "I'm going to be a webmaster! Within a week of starting the course I was creating Web sites. Already I'm proving to myself that I can do this."

Kay Ryan, project coordinator for the CFDC of Central Kootenay, started the program to offer training for people who are unable to study in conventional ways due to their disabilities. Participants with disabilities receive training in Web design and business management to create their own Web store in **Virtual Mall Canada** — [www.virtualmall.ca](http://www.virtualmall.ca), where they sell art and gifts from artisans in their region on commission.

"We are thrilled with the recognition the program has received from our funding partners at Western Economic Diversification Canada," says Ryan. "Their support has helped us expand the program both in our region and into other areas of the province."

Marcel Willaert graduated from the program last spring. His Web store, Spanky's Gallery ([www.spankymarc.ca](http://www.spankymarc.ca)), features the work of more than 10 artisans and artists, including his own non-traditional Aboriginal art pieces.

"The biggest draw of this program was the ability to become self-sufficient and get off disability," says Willaert, who suffers from spinal problems that limit his mobility. "The program rocked! It allows me to work from home, which was a big selling point, because I can't sit still for more than a couple hours at a time. It's given each of us [program participants] a sense of freedom, and now that I'm being productive, has made me feel better about myself."

Willaert's site has been up and running for a year now, and while sales are slowly coming in, he is working hard to find a bigger market for his artists.

"I update the site every week and try to keep it as fresh as I can," he says. "We had a marketing course in the program, so they taught us how to work with the search engines."



For the artisans whose works are sold at Virtual Mall Canada, becoming involved offers them a chance to sell their works without having to maintain their own Web sites. Airheart Design owner Deb Borsos produces hand-painted clothing and art pieces. Borsos says she doesn't have time to take care of a Web site herself, and having an entrepreneur post her images and take care of e-commerce makes sales easier for her ([www.bcartisan.com/deb\\_boros\\_page.htm](http://www.bcartisan.com/deb_boros_page.htm)).

"As an artist, it gives me another outlet for my sales, and it gives me much broader exposure than I could have on my own," said Borsos. "The entrepreneurs market their sites continually, and with so many artists involved, we're all promoting it as well. This program is mutually beneficial to the artists and the entrepreneurs."

# British C

## Entrepreneurs and Artisans

Robyn Beckman expects to complete her studies by early summer, and then link up with artists in Princeton where she lives. "This course has taken all the parts of Web design and put it into one program, but I'm able to work at my own pace," she says. "Because of my disabilities, I do my work in two-hour blasts."

She can't wait to get going with her own site. "I hope to be able to make a little money from the Web store, but I dream big," she says. "Eventually, I'd like to earn enough money to someday take me right off disability. My life would be a lot happier if I could support myself and my medical problems."

The online course is now accredited through Selkirk College in Castlegar. In March 2004, the program received a Minister's Award for Excellence and Innovation. And, in late April it also won a national Community Learning Award from the Conference Board of Canada, which is given out to programs that focus on learning efforts that use information and technology to develop necessary skills and competencies.

Thanks to Kay Ryan and Community Futures, dreams are coming true for disabled entrepreneurs across B.C.

For more information about the CFDC of Central Kootenay's programs and services for disabled entrepreneurs, call (250) 352-1933, or visit their office in Nelson or their Web site at: [www.futures.bc.ca](http://www.futures.bc.ca). 🍁



*Marcel Willaert works on his art in his studio.*



*Program participant Donna Salby works at her home computer creating Web sites as part of her class assignments.*

# Columbia



## First Class Facility for Marine Mammals

*continued from front page*



Western Economic Diversification Canada has invested \$405,832 to help the Aquarium relocate its Rehabilitation Centre to a new site provided by the Port of Vancouver.

The assistance will also help the aquarium to acquire new marine and veterinary equipment to ensure that mammals are received, quarantined and cared for in the most effective manner before they are released back into the wild. According to Marie Dickens of the Vancouver Aquarium, “the new equipment and facilities have provided

greater opportunities for success and effectiveness with our rescue objectives.”

The Vancouver Aquarium is the only facility of its kind in Western Canada that is internationally recognized for its high quality education and outreach programs and marine mammal expertise.

The Vancouver Aquarium has also received funding through the **Canada-British Columbia Infrastructure Program**, administered through Western Economic Diversification Canada. The \$2 million federal/provincial infrastructure funding will be used to construct a new Main Discovery Education Centre.

For more information about the Vancouver Aquarium and its marine rescue programs, visit [www.vanaqua.org](http://www.vanaqua.org).

For more information about WD programs and services, or the Canada-British Columbia Infrastructure Program, call 1-888-338-WEST (9378) or visit [www.wd.gc.ca](http://www.wd.gc.ca). 🍁