



**For Immediate Release**

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Contest Encourages Self-Employment & Empowerment for People with Disabilities**

Launch coincides with *International Day of Persons with Disabilities*

**November 27, 2018** – A unique contest will soon be open for video submissions by rural Canadians living with a disability or health condition and running their own business in Saskatchewan.

The Just Watch ME! video contest opens December 3rd, coinciding with the **United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities**, a day observed worldwide to empower persons with disabilities and ensure inclusiveness and equality. The contest is an initiative aimed at celebrating the small business success of rural Canadians with disabilities and encouraging others to embrace entrepreneurship on their own terms.

In Canada, the unemployment rate is higher for people with disabilities. According to Employment and Social Development Canada, persons with disabilities are more likely to be unemployed, to live in poverty and to earn less than people without a disability. They state that only 49% of Canadians with disabilities, aged 25 to 64, are employed, compared to 79% of Canadians without disabilities. Canadians with disabilities also reportedly earn 44% less than Canadians without disabilities.

Self-employment can be a viable option, and with the support of the Community Futures Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program, the conversation is changing. “In the last two years, we have helped 93 entrepreneurs with disabilities or health conditions start or expand their rural businesses,” reports Susan Bater, the Program Manager of the Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program for Community Futures Manitoba and Saskatchewan, the organizations behind the video contest.

“Launching your own business and creating the environment you need to succeed on your own terms can be a game changer for people with disabilities and health conditions,” says Bater. “Our annual video contest celebrates and showcases rural small business owners.”

One of last year’s top four winners, Lori Kobialko, is the owner of Arts in the Alley Studio in Rosthern, Saskatchewan. Arts in the Alley Studio is a bowling alley and art school that offers group classes to children and adults while also offering consignment space for other artists in the community.

“I love being an entrepreneur and having my own hours,” says Kobialko. “The biggest joy and the success that I get is the laughter that comes out of my building and the sense of accomplishment that people have when they do an art piece.”

Community Futures Sagehill supports entrepreneurs in the Rosthern area, which has seen many entries in the contest in the past few years.



“The contest provides an opportunity for entrepreneurs to share their story and celebrate all the hard work and dedication they have endured in moving their businesses forward,” says Susan Wehage, Community Futures Sagehill Small Business Specialist.

Any entrepreneur with a disability or health condition operating a business in rural Manitoba or rural Saskatchewan can submit a short one- to two-minute video about their business success on the Just Watch ME! video contest website. The contest is open for submissions from December 3, 2018 until January 22, 2019. The winners will be announced in February of 2019.

There are several prizes to be won, including cash prizes for Start Up and Seasoned Entrepreneurs. This year’s first place Seasoned Entrepreneur winner will receive \$1,000 cash and additional prizes to support their business, while the Start Up winner will receive \$250 cash and business support prizes. Additional prizes supplied by contest sponsors will also be awarded, and are listed on the contest website.

**Community Futures** is a non-profit organization assisting rural communities with economic development. For over 30 years, Community Futures has supported entrepreneurs to start a small business, expand a business or purchase an existing business. One of the programs they deliver is the **Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program** to support people with disabilities or ongoing health conditions in starting businesses in rural Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

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Contest website: [www.justwatchmecontest.ca](http://www.justwatchmecontest.ca)

**Please note: Past contest winners and Community Futures staff are available for interviews.**