

**Assiniboine Park Conservancy Takes Important Step Toward Inclusivity
as First Canadian Zoo and Park to Join the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Program**

For immediate release: Winnipeg, December 12, 2024 – The Assiniboine Park Conservancy (APC) has taken another important step toward accessibility and inclusivity as the first Canadian Zoo and Park to join the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower program. This new initiative will promote an accommodating, supportive, and positive visitor experience for people with hidden disabilities.

“We want Assiniboine Park to be a place that is welcoming to all members of our community, including those with hidden disabilities,” said Laurel Rempel, Learning and Development Specialist, Assiniboine Park Conservancy. “By partnering with the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower program, we are in a better position to provide support and assistance to these individuals and families if and when they need it.”

The Sunflower program encourages inclusivity, acceptance, and understanding by allowing people to voluntarily and discretely share that they have a hidden disability by wearing a recognized Sunflower item (e.g. lanyard or sticker). This lets APC staff and volunteers know the guest might need additional help, understanding, or simply more time.

The Sunflower program is recognized at all venues across Assiniboine Park. Complimentary Sunflower stickers are available upon request at the Visitor Services desks at The Leaf and Zoo. Visitors do not need to disclose the nature of their hidden disability. If they need assistance, they are encouraged to look for staff and volunteers wearing a white Sunflower supporter item, who have received training about the program and how to support guests with hidden disabilities.

The launch of the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower at Assiniboine Park builds on APC’s commitment to accessibility. APC is also proud to support the Easter Seals Canada’s Access 2 Card program and partner with KultureCity, a US-based not for profit organization, to make The Leaf and Zoo certified sensory inclusive attractions.

About the Sunflower Program

Hidden Disabilities Sunflower is a global program supporting individuals with non-visible disabilities, conditions, and neurodivergence. Since its inception in the UK in 2016, the Sunflower program has expanded its reach worldwide, working with organizations across a diverse range of sectors, including retail, financial services, transportation (with over 285 airports in 30 countries), travel and tourism, education, healthcare, emergency services, and entertainment.

The Sunflower symbol provides individuals with a discreet, voluntary way to share that they have a non-visible disability, condition, or neurodivergence and may need extra assistance, understanding, time, or space. This simple, non-verbal method empowers individuals to navigate their workplace and public spaces with greater confidence and ease, fostering a more inclusive and understanding environment.

As a privately held multinational company headquartered in the UK, Hidden Disabilities Sunflower operates in numerous countries, including Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Ireland, Latin America, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Mauritius, the UAE, the UK, and the USA.

For more information, please visit hdsunflower.com/ca.

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