



Herald photo by Ian Martens

Chris Schamber displays a item designed to keep accessible his phone, stylus and an iPod used for computer interface, an example of some of the simpler issues that could be addressed through a local branch of the Tetra Society, a Canada-wide organization aimed at removing or reducing barriers.

BREAKING BARRIERS

CITY MAN LAUNCHING BRANCH OF SOCIETY

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In Alberta, an estimated 500,000 people are living with some kind of disability. If physical access is the issue, Lethbridge resident Chris Schamber may be able to help.

But Schamber, a quadriplegic since a diving accident 25 years ago, wants to get the community involved as well. He's working to launch a Lethbridge branch of the Tetra Society, a Canada-wide organization aimed at removing or reducing barriers.

"We're looking for volunteers who will help people with a mobility impairment," he says. "I'm hoping to get five or six people with different

skills."

That would become a starting point, he adds. Anyone with an interest and an imagination will be welcome.

"There's a chapter in Calgary that's doing well," and groups in Medicine Hat and Edmonton as well.

While physical barriers like narrow doors and staircases may be expensive to remedy, Schamber says Tetra group members could also address much simpler issues. As a recent example, he credits a friend for putting together a small pouch which now holds a device that makes operating his laptop computer easier.

For someone in a wheelchair, he points out, zippers can be a real challenge. If someone can replace them with Velcro, it can make daily life that much easier.

Different people have different issues, however, and Schamber sees Tetra as a setting where people can learn about specific needs and brainstorm on how they might be met.

"Anything that could make someone's life easier through the day."

Monthly meetings are planned in the new year, he says. But people interested in helping may contact him at hatesnow@quaddesign.ca

In recent years, Schamber has become a barrier-free access advisor to city and municipal officials in southern Alberta through his company, Quad Design and Barrier Free Consulting.

He also designs full-access rental suites for developers. He'd also like to see projects which make all units barrier-free, he adds.

"I have developed some accessible complexes that I would like to see developed in years to come," he says.

Currently, there's an inadequate supply of accessible rental accommodation in Lethbridge, he says. But over the next 10 years, he believes about 20 per cent of the nation's people will need barrier-free sidewalks, recreation facilities and homes.