



**A**N ASSOCIATION  
FOR THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING COMMUNITY  
OF THE EASTERN TOWNSHIPS

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### **Pedalling towards supported inclusion**



Social inclusion is about having a sense of belonging and participation in the community and real opportunities to learn, work, and contribute. While important for everyone, inclusion can be challenging for some, especially for those with intellectual disabilities.

Pleins Rayons/Free Wheeling is carving a path for supported inclusion with their bilingual, social economy program for teenagers and young adults who have intellectual disabilities, are on the autistic spectrum, or are at-risk students at the high school level.

Based in Cowansville but serving the wider region, Pleins Rayons started up just two years ago but has already been twice recognized for their exemplary accomplishments with the “À Part Entière” prize from the Office des personnes handicapées du Québec (OPHQ). As the “Best Non-profit in Québec,” the program is contributing to a more inclusive society by engaging participants and including them as active community members while training them to have practical, professional skills and earn a small salary.

“Real, true social economy is about creating winning opportunities for these individuals...it’s about doing something concrete that has a direct impact on your community. I would challenge other non-profit organizations in our [area] to do the same. It’s important to value these individuals’ lives, they have so much to offer,” encouraged Stephen Marcoux, Pleins Rayons’ director general and director of operations. Pleins Rayons offers six projects for 56 different participants on a weekly basis (for a total of 82 spots a week!) including a fully functioning bike shop, building and selling birdhouses, partnering with local vineyards, and collecting scrap metal.

Although they generate some funds through their program, private donors and fundraisers, it isn't quite enough. Despite their prizewinning recognition, Pleins Rayons are still without any provincial support, which Marcoux says has been both problematic, and disappointing. The staff consists of two very busy and dedicated people, Marcoux and Myriam de Clausel de Coussergues, the administration and financing director. A third employee had to be let go due to a lack of funds.

To support this initiative, get your \$50 ticket to the wine and cheese fundraiser on February 8 at the Vignoble Orpailleur in Dunham [tickets: [www.pleinsrayons.ca](http://www.pleinsrayons.ca), 450-775-0957], visit their annual bike sale in May or donate to Pleins Rayons through Townshippers Foundation, 100-257 Queen, Sherbrooke, QC J1M 1K7. Secure donations may also be made online at [www.TownshippersFoundation.ca](http://www.TownshippersFoundation.ca).

Townshippers' recently interviewed Marcoux, and Tony Donavon, a program participant, on About Townshippers, our weekly radio show (CIDJ 99.1FM Tuesdays 10 am, Fridays 4 pm). You can listen to the complete interview online at [cidi991.com/podcasts/townshippers-24](http://cidi991.com/podcasts/townshippers-24).

Keep reading this column in the Brome County News for more from Townshippers' Association. Follow @Townshippers on Twitter, [Facebook.com/Townshippers](https://www.facebook.com/Townshippers) or visit [www.Townshippers.org](http://www.Townshippers.org) for activities and other information. Connect with Townshippers' in Lac-Brome at 3-584 Knowlton Rd, 450-242-4421, toll-free: 1-877-242-4421 or in Sherbrooke at 100 – 257 Queen, 819-566-5717, toll-free: 1-866-566-5717.

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Sources: <http://townshippers.qc.ca/at-20180123-pleins-rayons/>