

# A personal challenge leads to a job option

by Heidi Riley

Support For People With Disabilities

When **Tim Beals** could no longer work because of his medical condition, he spent a few months of boredom at home before inspiration struck. He started a FaceBook group for others experiencing the same disorder, and now he is an on-line ambassador for the **International Essential Tremor Foundation (IETF)**.

## What is Essential Tremor (ET)?

ET is a progressive neurological disorder. Those affected experience periods of uncontrollable shaking in their hands and sometimes in their heads as well. They also may experience a shaking or quivering voice.

## Tim's story

Tim first began to experience tremors in his hands around age 12. He is 32 now. Over the past few years, he experienced more tremors, and found he could no longer do manual labour.

## The PEI Council of People with Disabilities (PEICOD)

Tim began working with the PEICOD in Charlottetown, where he met with **Patricia Allen**, Employment Specialist. After determining his individual needs, he was referred to the **Work Abilities program**. The program encourages participants to assess their abilities and determine what jobs they can do with the skills they have.

## Training and employment

In 2004, Tim expanded on his interest in computers and decided to take an information technology program at **CompuCollege**. He got a job as a technical support analyst at a call centre, but began to have more difficulty with his tremors and needed to take time off. After consulting a neurologist, he was advised that a change in careers would be a better option.

## Starting over

After a few months at home, he was inspired by his friend Brian Langille's video blog, and started his own. "Doing Tim's Tirade was fun, and it was a lot of work," says Tim. "I scripted what I wanted to say, set up a video camera, and later edited it before posting it on You Tube."

While communicating through social networking sites and surfing the Internet, Tim discovered the **International Essential Tremor Foundation (IETF)**. IETF members include physicians, patients, educators, healthcare workers, parents, relatives, friends, and volunteers. Their mission is to provide information, education, services and support to those affected by ET.



Tim Beals works from his home in Hampshire connecting with others experiencing the same difficulties he is.

Tim became a member and used the information available through IETF to find out more about his disorder and about what medications and treatments are available.

His wife Lisa has been supportive through this process. "I can empathize with what he is going through, but it's not the same as him talking to other people in that situation."

He started an Essential Tremor Awareness Group on FaceBook by inviting people on his friends list to join. Membership started with about 15, and now it is up to 722. He talked to people on-line about ET and shared information. "Many people who have a disorder become very isolated," says Tim. "Communicating through this group helps people find others to talk to."

## Tim's ambassadorship

Two months ago, IETF asked Tim to represent them by becoming an on-line ambassador. "I had been doing this work for free for two years unofficially," says Tim. "It was exciting to continue the work and to do even more."

"I find out about new research, surgery, and medications used to combat ET," says Tim. "This service helps people find out more about the disorder." Tim advises people to check out the IETF website and to send for an information package. He is available to answer questions from the public. He shares his personal experience and reactions to the wide range of medications he takes to fight the symptoms of ET. "I let people know what works and does not work for me, and I suggest they talk to their doctors about trying different treatment methods."

## Future plans

"Working from home is ideal," says Lisa. "He can choose his own hours and work when he feels up to it."

"If I could find something to complement what I'm doing now, that would be great," says Tim. "As for the future, I'm still deciding where to go from here. I am open to any ideas that may come my way. I have been looking at other business options or more on-line work. For now, I am focusing on my IETF work."

The Work Abilities program is funded by the Canada/Prince Edward Island Labour Market Development Agreement ([www.lmda.pe.ca](http://www.lmda.pe.ca))



For more information about the **PEI Council of People with Disabilities**, visit [www.peicod.pe.ca](http://www.peicod.pe.ca)

For more information about Essential Tremor, visit [www.essentialtremor.org](http://www.essentialtremor.org)

To check out Tim's FaceBook group, visit [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) and search **Essential Tremor**

or visit [www.myspace.com](http://www.myspace.com) and search [groups.myspace.com/esstremor](http://groups.myspace.com/esstremor)