

# Darby Lee Young: Advocate for people with disabilities



*RITA MINGO, FOR THE CALGARY HERALD*

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Darby Lee Young *CALGARY*

Darby Lee Young wants Calgary to be among the most accessible cities in Canada, and she's

doing her part to realize that objective.

“Absolutely my hope and dream,” said Young. “In order for accessibility to work, period, everyone needs to be on the same plan. My favourite line is, as soon as there’s a barrier, my independence is gone. We should be removing those barriers so everyone can get in and feel inclusive. And not only people with disabilities; we’re talking seniors, families with strollers, we’re talking everybody.”

Young was born with mild cerebral palsy and is principal strategist with Level Playing Field, a consulting company that provides universal design solutions. This past summer she was recognized with the 2016 Western Legacy Award for Innovation by the Calgary Stampede, an institution near and dear to her heart.

“My first ever job was with the Stampede at 14,” Young said. “To win was extremely personal because it not only highlights and shows that people understand all the accessibility work that I’ve done over the years, but trying to make a difference with Level Playing Field. The Stampede were the first ones to look past my disability and say ‘hey, let’s give her a chance.’ ”

The focus of Level Playing Field is in line with her work on the city’s advisory committee on accessibility.

“Sitting on this committee, I noticed that a lot of the accessibility wasn’t to the extent of how we use the facility. It’s what the designers thought looked good on paper.”

Medically classified as a quadriplegic, few are as well versed in the issues of getting around this city than Young, who was born and raised here and lived one year in Denver as part of the national para-alpine ski team. Bringing Calgary up to par with a place like Vancouver is her ideal.

“We’ve definitely got a lot of different projects,” she said. “We’re consultants to East Village and making sure a lot of their projects will incorporate accessibility to the extent where it’s actually usable.”