



News Release

'Removing barriers' Darby Young recognized as one of Top 20 To Watch in 2017 by Calgary Herald for trying to create a Level Playing Field when it comes to accessible cities

Jan. 11, 2017
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CALGARY, Alta. – When Darby Lee Young describes how cities can become more accessible – and ultimately more successful – she answers in simple yet poignant terms.

“As soon as there’s a barrier, my independence is gone,” Young, who was born with mild cerebral palsy and has overcome obstacles her entire life, recently told [The Calgary Herald](#).

“We should be removing those barriers so everyone can get in and feel (included). And not only people with disabilities; we’re talking seniors, families with strollers – we’re talking everybody.”

It’s that forward-thinking mindset that has resulted in The Calgary Herald naming Young to the popular newspaper’s list of [Compelling Calgarians: 20 People to Watch in 2017](#).

As the owner, founder and principle accessibility strategist, Young has taken her company, Level Playing Field, from passion-fuelled grassroots initiative to impressive blossoming business in just under a year.

“In order for accessibility to work – period – everyone needs to be on the same (plane),” Young told The Herald, explaining the thinking that helped get Level Playing Field off the ground.

One “hope and dream” of Young’s is to make her hometown, the City of Calgary, one of the most accessible cities in the country. But her vision expands much further, with longterm plans to take universal design solutions to cities, towns, places and spaces across the country, south of the border and maybe even around the world.

“We’ve definitely got a lot of different projects,” Young told The Herald. “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.”



Level Playing Field has already provided accessibility consultation for concerts such as the Calgary Folk Music Festival and Stagecoach Music Festival, presented by Goldenvoice, in California.

The company is now working on universal design contracts with major Alberta development companies such as Calgary Municipal Land Corporation; West Campus Development Trust; Jayman Built, ATCO, Ltd.; and MasterBUILT Hotels.

Young's own quickly growing business is also forming partnerships with local architectural firms such as NORR and Stantec Architects, as well as alliances with contracting companies such as Ryan Murphy Construction.

It makes sense that an ambitious young woman with plenty of lived experience facing accessibility challenges is now helping some of the City of Calgary's top development minds figure out how to make their buildings and other developments as inclusive and accessible as possible.

Young also has years of additional advocacy work under her belt, including with the City of Calgary's advisory committee on accessibility, which helped earn her an actual belt buckle this past fall.

Young received a [2016 Calgary Stampede Western Legacy Award](#), in the [innovation category](#), at a celebratory gala that recognized her for turning "accessibility into advocacy."

Young said she's truly honoured, thankful and proud to receive these recent recognitions – both the Compelling Calgarian nod and Western Legacy Award – but she's mostly focused on making the world accessible – one day, one project at a time.

"We work with architects, designers, property managers – anyone who owns a space – to make sure it's accessible," Young explained in her nomination video for this year's Western Legacy Awards.

"The biggest thing is breaking down barriers; making sure that everybody feels included," she said. "We want to have equal opportunity to get everyone through the main doors, and treated fairly."

For more information on Young and Level Playing Field, please visit levelplayingfield.ca. Follow Level Playing Field on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) to stay up-to-date on our latest projects and accessibility initiatives.



For media requests, please contact:

Darby Lee Young
Owner, Founder & Principal Accessibility Strategist
Level Playing Field
(403) 612-7970
darby@levelplayingfield.ca

Kristen Lipscombe
Communications Director
Level Playing Field
(902) 579-5747
krislipscombe@hotmail.com

About Level Playing Field

Level Playing Field is a consulting company that provides Universal Design solutions. We evaluate, develop and promote accessible and Universal Design for all urban environments including residential, commercial, recreational, as well as for concerts, festivals, conventions and other events. Our work manifests with the belief that all new and old environments, to the greatest extent possible, should be accessible by everyone regardless of their age, ability or circumstance. We promote the concept of Universal Design in both construction and manufacturing disciplines, through research, design assistance and training. Until you are in a situation where you are disabled, it is hard to imagine that getting around within a city is a challenge. Level Playing Field is here to help remove the barriers and make the world inclusive for all. Visit levelplayingfield.ca for more information.