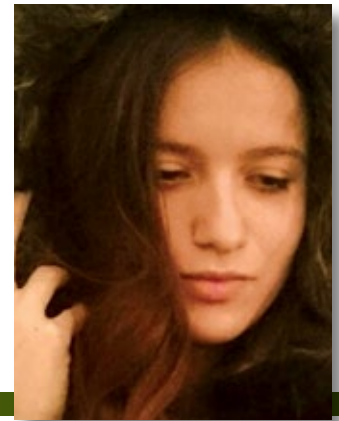


Twenty-five Years and Counting: AWA's Climb and Run for Wilderness

By Esther Bogorov



"Climb 802 stairs," I advertised to many curious folks about AWA's annual Climb and Run for Wilderness. "Anyone can do it," I added enthusiastically, not fully believing it myself. How could it be painless to climb the Calgary Tower?

It turns out – thanks to good spirits, beautiful paintings, and plentiful water – it's true: *you*, too, really can do it. And it was an amazing time. From an array of diverse and interesting displays to great music and delicious motivational snacks, Climb and Run for Wilderness 2016 was a success. As a first time attendee, I was so pleased to see how many people came out for Al-

berta Wilderness Association and chose to celebrate Earth Day together with us. An 8:00 a.m. Saturday morning start for participants made it clear how much people wanted to show they care. The 5:30 a.m. start for volunteers really took that demonstration of dedication and commitment to the next level.

In the morning, while I was busy setting up a face-painting station and teaching passers-by about milkweed plants, Andrea Johancsik, another first-time Climb for Wilderness attendee, was busy sweeping the race. The members of the International Tower Running Association bolted ahead,

breaking records on the sprint around the block and up the stairs. At the end of the line was Nessie, a seasoned 84-year-old runner. "Nessie was so inspiring," said Andrea. "She has been running this for years — she told me she had to take some time off, but she's back at it complete with rainbow spandex running pants." Andrea went on to say: "One of the best moments was arriving behind Nessie at the top of the tower and everyone broke into cheers. That was really nice."





Joanna Skrajny, another member of the AWA team who had never been to the Climb, shared several lasting impressions. “I was surprised and amazed by how energetic the whole event was,” she said, adding that “walking up the stairs was easier because the kid in front of me was beating everyone.” She loved seeing couples and families enjoying the walk up, but she said, “I got so excited by this kid that I didn’t realize what I was getting into trying to keep up with him until the

next day, when I was sore.” She pointed out that the good energy and good mood all around the Tower brought together a community on this special morning.

Despite it being a tough economic year for many people in the city of Calgary, AWA was very pleased with the financial commitments its dedicated members made at the Climb to support the organization, your wilderness and wildlife causes, and Earth Day. The standout again this year was Richard Guy who was

celebrating his 100th birthday. His inspiration is ageless. He’s such a motivating force to those who joined us for the festivities. Richard was this year’s top fundraiser – bringing in over \$5,700 in donations. His passion and strength made the challenge to “climb 802 stairs” so much easier. 🌲

Photos courtesy of J. Quiroz and K. Mihalcheon.