Carolyn MacDiarmid is a Communications Editor for The Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work. She herself has a disability (low vision) and uses computer screen magnification software and a hand-held magnifier to do her work.

Sarah Ennals is a 2001 graduate of the Ontario College of Art & Design and has a previous degree in English from the University of Toronto. She is currently residing in Toronto.
About This Book...

This book is a project of The Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work, a national, non-profit organization that promotes and supports inclusion, accessibility, and the equitable employment of persons with disabilities.

Over the years, CCRW has had to undo many misconceptions about disability and identified a need for early education regarding disability and individual differences. CCRW also identified a need for children’s storybooks that represent persons with disabilities. This book is the result of CCRW’s attempt to address these needs and is a tool that can be used to give children a positive message about disabilities while entertaining young readers with rhyme, rhythm, and humour.

Wendy Blair, the character in this book, represents each of us. Wendy is angelic and naughty and has strengths and weaknesses, talents and capabilities, and emotions and feelings. These attributes make up the very core of each of us, and it is our core that defines us. We are not defined by a single attribute such as a disability. This is important to remember when we meet someone and decide not to get to know him or her because we’re not comfortable with a particular attribute of that person. Instead, we should adjust our focus and our attitude to see, appreciate, and celebrate all the attributes that make each of us so wonderfully unique.

Carolyn MacDiarmid
The Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work
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Edited and published in Toronto, Canada by
The Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work

Design and layout by Heidy Lawrance Associates (Toronto)

Printed and bound in Canada by Friesens (Altona)

THIS BOOK IS AVAILABLE IN ALTERNATE FORMATS. CONTACT CCRW AT 416-260-3060 OR 1-800-664-0925 OR info@ccrw.org.

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

MacDiarmid, Carolyn, 1964–
I’m Wendy Blair, not a chair!

ISBN 978-1-896508-56-6


PZ7.M144Im 2002

Second Printing, February 2003

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I’m Wendy Blair, Not a Chair!

بةOntario

The support of the Government of Ontario through the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario, Ministry of Citizenship is acknowledged.

With additional funding from

Esso Kids Program

Imperial Oil

Purolator

Esso

WAL-MART CANADA CORP.

A project of

The Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work
Le Conseil Canadien de la Réadaptation et du Travail
Everyone knew Wendy Blair —
The girl who popped out of her chair.
The girl who sculpted plasticine
Just like a magic carving queen.
The girl who threw a basketball
Beyond the hoop and down the hall.
The girl who hopscotched like a pro,
No matter where the stone would go.
At lunchtime, she would shoot her peas
Between the supervisor’s knees.
She often won the spelling bee
With words like “disability”.
And following her royal rules,
She liked to dress in precious jewels.
She liked to hold them to the sun
And watch them sparkle — every one.
Then suddenly there was no jewel —
Wendy didn’t come to school.

Days and weeks and months did pass,
And Wendy still was not in class.
While meeting in the reading station, Miss Bert explained the situation.

“I’m sad to tell you,” said Miss Bert, “But Wendy has been badly hurt.”
Then holding pictures in the air,
She showed them Wendy’s wheelchair.
One Monday, Wendy did return,
But all her friends showed great concern.

Everybody stopped to stare
At Wendy in her wheelchair.
At recess when she tried to play,
They treated her a different way.

They left her sitting on her own —
Bored, ignored, and all alone.
The principal — she spoke with him
And planned a meeting in the gym.
And there when everybody met,
She made a speech they’d not forget:
“My name is Wendy Erin Blair,
And I’m a person, not a chair.
I got knocked down by someone’s car,
But I’m still human like you are.
My legs got hurt and don’t work well,
But I can still run for the bell.
I don’t use legs — I use a chair.
It helps me to go everywhere.
I’m still alive as you can see.
Don’t be afraid to talk to me.
Watch me — see what I can do,
And let me play and work with you.
Don’t make judgments. Please be fair.
I’m still Wendy Erin Blair.”

The children didn’t wait or pause —
They gave their friend their best applause!
To her delight and satisfaction, Wendy Blair was back in action!
Her hopscotch friends were wise to figure, “Let’s make the squares a little bigger.”
And in the classroom, I declare —
She seemed to pop out of her chair!
At art, she sculpted every line
To show the REAL Frankenstein!

I’m Wendy Blair, not Frankenstein!
At lunchtime, she still shot her peas —
The supervisor felt the breeze!
She often won the spelling bee
With words like “capability”.

Sometimes she got the basketball
Inside the hoop and not the hall.
And like her jewels in the sun,
She sparkled when her teammates won.
Now all her friends at school have found
The chair helps her to get around.

But she is still their Wendy Blair —
A clever person, not a chair!
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