Carolyn MacDiarmid is the author of CCRW’s Wendy Blair storybook series. As a humourist with a visual disability, she writes from the heart and strives to educate entertainingly. She is an Ontarian with Maritime roots and a devoted mom.

Sarah Ennals is a graduate of both the University of Toronto and the Ontario College of Art & Design. She has designed theatrical sets and illustrated I’m Wendy Blair, Not a Chair!, the first book in the Wendy Blair series.

The CCRW invites you to enjoy the first book in the Wendy Blair series, I’m Wendy Blair, Not a Chair!, as was sponsored by Imperial Oil, Wal-Mart Canada Corp., Purolator, and the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario, Ministry of Citizenship.
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.

CCRW firmly believes that “disability education” should begin in childhood to help ensure a positive and informed social response to disability. *Wendy Blair and the Assignment* is the second in a series of books that feature the wonderful attributes and antics of Wendy Blair, a young girl who succeeds in helping others see beyond her disability. The first book, *I’m Wendy Blair, Not a Chair!*, initially distributed in Ontario, generated positive feedback from Ontarians of all ages and is now receiving national recognition. CCRW will continue to develop the Wendy Blair storybooks to nurture the connection readers have made with the main character in the series.

Each of us represents Wendy Blair, as we are each multi-faceted and cannot be defined by, or labelled according to, a single characteristic such as a disability. People should be referred to by name only, as a name represents a person in his or her totality. Labels are limiting and were developed for the purpose of categorizing; they do not give justice to the unique blend of “ingredients” or characteristics that make each of us extraordinary. Wendy Blair has been labelled “the girl in the wheelchair” when she is actually: “a budding artist who is very creative; someone who enjoys playing basketball; someone who is fun and mischievous; someone who is well-spoken; someone who is patient and observant...” and the description continues.

Carolyn MacDiarmid  
The Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work
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A project of

The Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work
Le Conseil Canadien de la Réadaptation et du Travail
The last assignment of the term
Made classroom nine begin to squirm.
“You think you know your parents well —
I bet you don’t,” joked Mrs. Bell.
She then continued with a smirk,
“You’ll go with Mom or Dad to work.”
“Perhaps design a questionnaire
To learn what Mom or Dad does there.”

“Your parents know about this, too,
But letters will go home with you.”

The class was shocked and couldn’t speak.
Hurray! No school for a week!
“I know,” thought Wendy Erin Blair, “I’ll go with Mom to Chez Pierre.”
Chez Pierre, a jewellery store,
Had tonnes of jewels to explore.
On display were bands of gold
And shiny pieces, new and old.
Mrs. Blair worked 8 to 4;  
She made some jewellery for the store.

As she and Wendy strolled to work  
The weather forecast went berserk.

The sunshine turned to rain instead  
With Chez Pierre just up ahead.

In front the store had many stairs  
That weren’t designed for wheelchairs.
The back was dismal, dark and damp
But had an entrance with a ramp.
Inside as Wendy filed by
She seemed to capture every eye.

The staff are good at peek-a-boo...
Do they not have enough to do?
Mom’s new boss, a little snooty,
Glared at Wendy while on duty.

The boss was Madam O. Yewhoo —
She always shared her point of view.
Then Wendy’s mom got called away
For O. Yewhoo had words to say.
“You didn’t tell me, Mrs. Blair,
That Wendy has a wheelchair.
The muddy wheels have marked the tiles,
Her chair is too big for the aisles,
We lack the space her chair demands —
She might knock down our earring stands.
I’m sure the staff will stare at her,
And steady work will not occur.
Oh Mrs. Blair, I think it’s clear —
We cannot have your daughter here!”
Mrs. Blair felt very cross,
But she was patient with her boss.

“Madam Yewhoo, do be fair
For that’s my little girl out there.
Wendy’s human, Wendy’s real,
Wendy thinks and she can feel.
Yes, she got hit by a car,
But she’s a person like you are.
Her legs got hurt — she needs the chair.
It helps her to go everywhere.
She’s still alive and has a mind,
She’s very bright, as you will find.
My daughter will be careful, and
She will not bump an earring stand.
If people stare, one thing is true —
They do not have enough to do.
My daughter’s here for her report,
So do not make her visit short.”
Then with a spin, Mom turned around,
And back to Wendy she was bound.
But Mom was beckoned like before —
Her boss had comments, even more!
Wendy sat without a stir —
Was all the talk because of her?
Mom came back and she was sweating; Oh, how frazzled she was getting!
Wendy learned about Mom’s work
With Madam Yewhoo in the lurk.

Mom told Wendy with a frown,
“Lately sales have gone right down.”

“Let’s design a jewellery piece
To try to help the sales increase.”

Said Wendy, “There are reasons why
Some folks do not come in to buy.”

“Chez Pierre must do much more
To bring the people to the store.”
“A ramp in front would help boost sales,  
And all that takes is wood and nails.”

“Not everyone can climb a stair;  
A ramp’s a thing we all can share.”
“And secondly, it’s my advice —
The staff should wear the merchandise.”

“Have a runway, do a show,
And model gems from head to toe.”

“We’ll craft a piece,” on Wendy went,
“And model it at this event.”
The boss called out, “Oh mamma mia! Wow! I love the show idea!”

“Let’s get to work,” cried O. Yewhoo, “For there’s so much we need to do!”
Wendy’s days would quickly pass; 
On Monday she was back in class.
On weekends Wendy helped prepare
With other staff at Chez Pierre.
On Saturday, May 21st
The show was on and well-rehearsed.
The people came from far and wide;
Some used the ramp to get inside.
The models were from Chez Pierre,
And they included Wendy Blair.

Yewhoo wore the latest thing —
A new piece called a heel ring.

It was wild and it was trendy,
It was made by Mom and Wendy!

It had been a long, long while
Since Madam Yewhoo showed such style!
The crowd so loved the little craft,
They even got it autographed!

Sales went up a large percent
With items bought and dollars spent.
Mom’s new boss had words to share —
This time she beckoned Wendy Blair!
“Oh Wendy dear, I must confess
That I have shown such thoughtlessness.
I’ve been unkind and incorrect
To treat you with such disrespect.
Forgive me, I have been quite rude;
I’ve learned to change my attitude.
You’ve done so much for Chez Pierre,
Because you’re Wendy, not a chair.
I really must apologize —
You’re so creative, clever, wise…”

Said Wendy, “Don’t forget, I’m cool!
And Madam Yewhoo…"
you’re a jewel!”
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.

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