

Sheldon Zamick
Looking at Life Through His Eyes
by
Brian Campbell

When Sheldon Zamick was diagnosed as legally blind with Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP) in 1992, he could have let the bad news take hold of him and given up on any hope of living a productive life. But Sheldon isn't that type of person. He decided early on to be grateful for what he did have, rather than focus on what he had lost.

"I still have a very creative mind," he says. "I have been fortunate to be married to my wife, Florence, for over 33 years, who is wonderful and super supportive and we have two great kids."

"I am also fortunate enough to have a very loyal Real Estate clientele," he adds.

So he decided that this setback was not going to defeat him and he has gone on to prove just how successful a person with limited vision and unlimited passion can be. Sheldon says, "People ask me, 'how do you do it?' If I have an appointment to show properties, to do a listing or make a sale, I get there and get the job done."

Sheldon is celebrating his 30th successful year in Real Estate. He volunteered on the Winnipeg Real Estate Board (WREB) board of directors for five years, including chairing Government Relations and as Treasurer. In 2013-2014, he was elected as a director for the Canadian Real Estate Association (CREA), which has a membership of more than 100,000.

He helped the CREA deal with a very difficult situation during his time on the board. "The Quebec Association temporarily separated from the CREA," he says. "I was proud to be one of the 16 people to help knit it back together. It is important to listen closely and, at times, to make sensible compromises so people can work out their differences and do what is best for all members across the country."

Sheldon finds working at Sutton Group-Kilkenny Real Estate very exciting. "You help people with their biggest asset in many cases," he says. "You deal with people in their good times and bad, sometimes listening to their intimate, deep thought and

you have to take it seriously. You also need to be able to counsel them in an honest and thoughtful way. I always treat my clients the same way that I would wish to be treated”

“When you do a good job for people, they are usually very happy and they often refer others to you, and that’s how you make a living,” Sheldon says. “You just have to be an honest, fair, hard-working Realtor and you’ll do well. It doesn’t matter if you are legally blind. If you want to be successful, you can do it.”

Not only has Sheldon worked very hard as a Realtor, he has also been very active in serving his community by volunteering with a number of causes. Of course CNIB is very close to his heart, starting out as a client, then helping out with fundraising. Sheldon served on the CNIB board for more than 12 years, helped raise over \$1,000,000 for CNIB through the Visions Luncheon and by chairing the CNIB Eye on the Arts Auction for nine years. He says, “I think people just don’t realize that there are thousands of people in our city and our province who are visually impaired or totally blind.”

“When you are legally blind, you are not completely blind, but you have blind issues,” Sheldon says. “You don’t see certain things, in some light you don’t see anything at all, and you may only see parts of things. It’s a unique way to live, but you have to adapt to it and I haven’t let it stop me.”

As government funding becomes more and more stretched and limited, many charities have found more need to look elsewhere for the necessary funds to support their members, and the CNIB is no exception. Sheldon remembers, “There was a time when I was on the CNIB board where we were unsure of whether or not we could continue to provide complimentary white canes. We decided that there was no way we couldn’t do it, so we found a way to make it happen.”

“There is nothing that you can’t do if you really want to do it,” he adds. “I remember in the 1980’s, when I volunteered on the Variety Club board, Variety World chair, Monty Hall, said, ‘the littlest thing you do makes the biggest difference’.”

Sheldon is extremely passionate about helping others any way he can. “I find it very exciting to help groups and organizations raise funds and awareness for important causes,” he says. “Some people golf or do other things, but I find that helping out causes is very rewarding for me.”

Over the years, Sheldon has helped out Variety Club, Habitat for Humanity, Muscular Dystrophy, Siloam Mission, Mount Carmel Clinic, CJA, JNF and many other charitable organizations.

He even combined his work in Real Estate with his charitable work by helping other Realtors to support important causes. He was on the Board of Governors of the Manitoba Real Estate Association Shelter Foundation. Sheldon says, "I started 'Gimme Shelter' Social, which raises money every year for shelter related causes."

Sheldon was asked to be National REALTOR® Campaign Chair for the Canadian Museum for Human Rights and helped to raise \$2,000,000 through Canadian Realtors. "We managed to do it, and now there is a permanent 'R' on the outside of the Museum that says, 'For Realtors'," he says. "What your mind can conceive and believe, you can achieve. Just try. Never give up."

Sheldon received the CMHC/MREA Distinguished Realtor Award in 2011 for his charitable work.

Not surprisingly, Sheldon is often asked to be a motivational speaker. "I have really enjoyed that," he says. "It is important to give people encouragement, and I find it very easy to do, because it comes from the heart. I feel very fortunate."

Sheldon is currently the Manitoba President for the Canadian Associates of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, in the south of Israel, and is on the National Board. BGU is a world class University with 21,000 students from around the world and is a leader in Cyber Security, Technology, Science, Engineering, Medicine, Robotics and Water Management.

He is also on the board and helping to support Magen David Adom which he refers to as "The Jewish Red Cross." The work he does with Magen David Adom is helping to send ambulances to Israel.

With all that Sheldon does, he still makes sure to set aside time to spend with his family. His son, Steven, is living and working in Toronto and his daughter, Natalie, is currently living and working in Vancouver. Sheldon says, "I'm very excited to see how well they are doing."

Sheldon and his wife, Florence, love hosting friends in their home or around their pool in the summer. They also love to travel. "We love to take cruises," he says. "We recently came back from Israel, and made a trip to England and France last year."

They also enjoy spending time in their neighbourhood. It's a wonderful neighbourhood," he says. "I love being near Assiniboine Park. In nice weather we usually take long walks in the park."

"It's an exciting place to work as well," he adds. "I have had the good fortune to have some wonderful clients and I have been able to sell them some beautiful homes. It has been very gratifying."

Sheldon is currently writing a book called, 'If You Could See Things My Way'. He says, "It will be a double entendre both on how I see and all my life experiences." He hopes to have the book completed later this year.

So, for the foreseeable future, Sheldon plans to continue enjoying life, spending time with his family, helping people to find the right home, motivational speaking and, of course, supporting the causes that are close to his heart. He says, "I want to do the best I possibly can for others and exceed people's expectations."