



PAM'S STORY

RECEIVING MUCH NEEDED RESPITE

When Pam's son was 2, she was told he had limited communication and verbal skills. With a second baby at home, family life was now defined by her son's needs. She and her husband became isolated, rarely socialized with other adults. Community Living Durham North, a United Way funded agency, offered respite, a place for him to stay for weekends. He thrived! Knowing her son was safe and engaged, Pam had time alone to do ordinary things...just to breathe. Pam's son, now 38, will require a lifetime of care, but with compassion and support in the community, Pam has hope.




Pam's Story

"My husband and I crumbled into each other in the car after the doctor told us our precious 2-year-old was "retarded".

Neither of us knew what to do next. Our second child was an infant of about 6 months, and we had just sold our home in Ajax to move to Uxbridge. We worried we would have to reconsider the move to access the services we may need.

Luckily, there was a day care program, just a short drive from our new home, and they took special needs children to help prepare them for school. Then we found our local school had a special needs class.

Things seemed to be going well, but we found it difficult to find a sitter for our two children as we didn't want to burden anyone with the extra care and hands-on required of overseeing our son, including during his teenage years.



Looking back, over the years, my husband and I became rather isolated, rarely going out for nights on our own or to social events with other adults.

His communication was limited with only speaking a few words, minimal sign language and gestures. We needed someone with a special skill set; an every day babysitter was not enough. Looking back, over the years, my husband and I became rather isolated, rarely going out for nights on our own or to social events with other adults.



When I first heard of Community Living, the Port Perry location was opening a Respite home and were going to start offering weekend respite to families of young children. For the first time in a long time, we could plan to go out for dinner by ourselves.

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Respite service wasn't available as often as we would have liked, but it seemed like freedom on the 6-week rotation we were able to access. It's hard to admit,

but it seemed that our son was ok with us leaving him;
he was ready for the freedom too.

Pretty soon, HE was asking US when he was going to
the Respite home, and soon he was in a rhythm where
we found him packing his bag the week of his visit
without prompting.



A Youth program was then introduced, thanks to funding received from the United Way, and our son was now able to make friends his own age who knew what it was to need a friend. When he finished school at age 21, he entered the adult respite program and we were able to access week-long respite every 8 weeks.

Finally, he was being supported by staff who understood his limitations, and he thrived!

Upon graduation, he was also offered a day program in our hometown of Uxbridge through Community

Living Durham North. What a change from the school system! Finally, he was being supported by staff who understood his limitations, and he thrived!

Most recently my husband, our son's father, and I disagreed with his want to retire back to his home country in Europe. The supports are much different there and life would be quite difficult for our son since he would need to learn a new language.

This, having led to our divorce after 43 years of marriage, has been very hard to deal with and CLDN has been very compassionate in supporting not only our son, but me as well, in easing the way. We could not be more grateful."

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