



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

SUMMER 2017

RAVEN: SOARING TO SUCCESS

After reading an article in the media about a fire at a group home, Raven knew she had to tell her story.

Raven felt that the tone of the story and some of the online commentary were unfair. She felt that they didn't accurately represent either the youth who live in group homes or those who work hard every day to care for those youth.

Raven, now 24, came into the care of Durham CAS as baby along with her older brother. She lived in foster homes and group homes throughout her time in care. Of her time in a group

home, Raven says that she loved the staff and many of the other girls she lived with. "They were my family," she says with conviction.

At age 15 Raven moved into the foster home where she stayed until age 18. Upon reflection, Raven says that, like many teens, she may have been a bit of a challenge for her foster family. When she moved out, they felt she would be better off staying with them but they respected her decision and supported her every step of the way.

She says that she still feels guilty now years later because she wishes that she had tried harder to stay close to them. "They were my ultimate supporters and were so good to me; I loved them so much."

Like her caregivers at both the group home and her last foster home, Raven also speaks very positively about her experience with her CAS workers and volunteers. Three years after aging out of care, she still keeps in touch with Amanda Burns, her Children's Service Worker.

"Amanda is my rock; always there for me," says Raven. "She listens and helps me work through any difficulties. She has always believed in me."

That fondness is mutual. "Raven has a great sense of humour, is very resilient, confident and smart," says Amanda. "She has a good head on her shoulders." Amanda hears from Raven regularly, and is always happy to talk to her and offer any support she can even though she is no longer her worker.

Amanda is also quick to point out that, while Raven definitely is an impressive young woman, she is not necessarily an exception. "Many kids in care are strong, smart and resilient, and will do well in life."

"I got so much from CAS, I want to give back, and I want other youth to know that someone cares about them."
- Raven

Another significant relationship that Raven has is with her aunt with whom she visited throughout her youth. She developed a very special bond with her aunt who continues to inspire Raven to dream and work hard. She taught Raven that she could learn and do anything, and she gave Raven the motivation to realize her dreams.

Raven also looks back fondly on her experience with her volunteer driver, Jim. Jim was a consistent and stable presence in her life; even when workers changed, her volunteer driver stayed the same. She looked forward to that routine, she knew that on every drive she could talk to him.



RAVEN: SOARING TO SUCCESS... CONTINUED

Sometimes they talked about concerns that Raven had and Jim would always help, usually guiding her to sort out her feelings and come to a solution on her own.

Aging out of care was very stressful. Learning how to budget and manage money were challenges that Raven found particularly difficult. While in care Raven took advantage of every opportunity she could to learn, and says that life in the group home was especially helpful. The routine laid the groundwork for later living independently. The group home staff was like family and she learned a lot about maintaining a home, cleaning, cooking and grocery shopping. "I love learning," says Raven.

Raven eagerly participated in the life skills programs offered by Durham CAS. While the skills learned were certainly important, it was the camaraderie of the other youth that was perhaps more impactful. Spending time with other youth who have the same experiences and are facing the same stresses gave Raven a sense of community. "Being there with other youth made me feel not so alone."

Raven feels so strongly about the life skills program, she wants to help out now and give back to youth currently in care. "I want to share my life experiences," she says. "I got so much from CAS, I want to give back, and I want other youth to know that someone cares about them."

Like her desire to help youth in our life skills program, Raven aspires to a career helping others as a child and youth worker. She is well on her way; she has started her Child and Family Services diploma and has recently started a job in the field. "Getting this job was my dream. I have this job because people in my life supported and inspired me, and taught me to dream."

After spending a bit of time with Raven, it's no surprise that she called the media outlet when she saw that story on the group home.

***"Believe in yourself.
Find your path and
you will be fine."***

- Raven

Raven has a big heart and is very protective of those who have supported her over the years. Telling her story is just one way that Raven can give back. She wants the public to see that children and youth in care, and those that work with them, are compassionate, intelligent, dedicated people who deserve respect.

When asked what she would say to other youth in care, Raven pauses a moment and says "Believe in yourself. Find your path and you will be fine."

Our VISION

Building hope and opportunities with children, youth and families.

Our MISSION

Working with families and communities for the safety, stability and wellbeing of children and youth.

Anti-oppressive practice DIRECTIONAL STATEMENT

We are committed to anti-oppressive practice in which we challenge the impacts of power and privilege, eliminate barriers, and are inclusive of the broad range of diversity in our community.



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GROWING FAR MORE THAN VEGGIES

Amy Smith and Karen Saunders (pictured below, l-r) are Child and Youth Workers - Preparation for Independence Leads. They help youth in our care learn a variety of life skills and support them as they approach the time that they will be 'aging out of care.' In addition to teaching skills such as cooking and budgeting, and about healthy relationships and nutrition, this spring they launched an exciting new initiative.

Amy had the vision of a vegetable garden that was planned, maintained and harvested by youth. She felt that it could be a healthy, educational and fun project that would complement the life skills programming that we already provide. Amy's focus is on developing programming and supporting mental health and well-being for youth in care. She knew a garden would be a perfect project to support this work.

Amy learned that Carea Community Health Centre had available plots in their community garden that would be perfect for this project. She and Karen got the project underway, and invited fellow Child and Youth Worker, Kevin Anderson to assist. Kevin eagerly stepped up with his wealth of gardening experience. He helped with the planning, donated items and helped plant it.

The youth gardening club meets weekly through the summer to maintain the garden.

They have the pleasure of seeing carrots, kale, onions, peas, peppers, strawberries and herbs flourish because of their hard work.

Every stage of the project provides a variety of learning opportunities. In addition to maintaining the garden, they plan to incorporate the harvest into other life skills projects. They will use the food in the cooking program, and they will learn about marketing the produce with a mini 'farmers market.'

Gardening provides a wide range of therapeutic opportunities that can be especially impactful on youth involved with CAS, all of whom have experienced disruption, trauma and other challenges in their lives. Benefits are both physical and psychological.

Being outside, getting exercise and working on a collaborative project provides the following and more:

- physical benefits of exercise and fresh air
- inspiring imagination and a desire to learn
- science, math and business education

- seeing how seeds, sunlight, water, soil and a little hard work can feed you
- sense of responsibility and accomplishment
- encourages healthy eating and fresh food preparation
- connection to other people, companionship and teamwork
- stimulation of brain function
- alleviates stress
- helps one stay calm and focused
- improves moods and self-esteem
- decreases anxiety and depression
- helps control emotions
- promotes mindfulness and contemplation
- encourages respect for others and the earth

Ideally, the youth who participate in the garden project will experience all of these benefits. Amy and Karen also hope that this is just the beginning of an ongoing initiative that will assist youth in care for years to come.

We'd like to thank Carea for assisting us with this project. In addition to providing the garden plot, they provide gardening tools and storage space for our supplies.

The youth garden project proves that cooperation does indeed bear fruit, both literally and figuratively.



CELEBRATING A GOOD LIFE WITH LOGAN

It's not an official holiday yet, but June 30 has been declared 'Logan Day' by one very happy family. It is to be celebrated annually by getting a new fish.

On June 30 of this year, eight year old Logan celebrated one year living with his dads and their dog, Finnegan. To mark this milestone, the whole family went to court to make it official: Aaron and Jeremy are now legally Logan's dads.

To celebrate, they wore matching t-shirts, made and adopted a teddy bear and got some new fish. To make it even more remarkable, the day was capped off with an incredible random act of kindness. After celebrating with dinner at Logan's restaurant of choice, their server informed them that the guests who had just left the table beside them had paid for their meal. They can only guess that they must have overheard them tell their story to the server. Even strangers were celebrating 'Logan Day.'

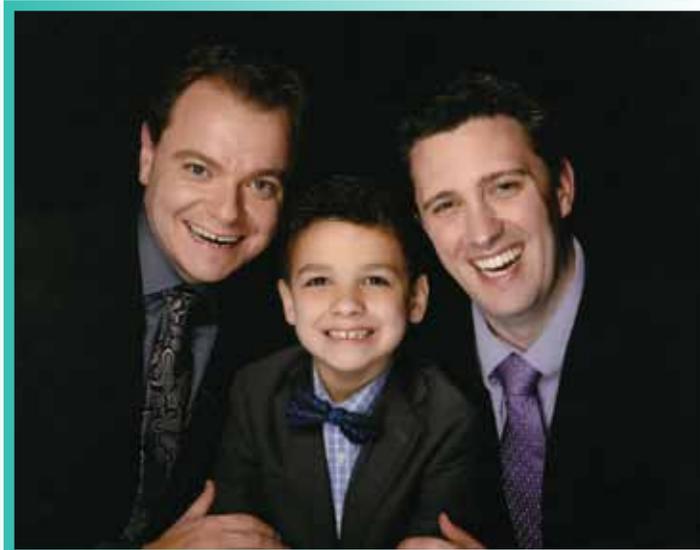
Last year, June 30 was the first day of Logan's adoption placement. Logan chose the first day after the school year ended as the day that he would move into his new home. He chose that day because he didn't want to waste any time; he was moving the first day he could.

Aaron and Jeremy began their journey four years ago. Shortly after completing the home study, their worker, Laura Jenkins-Pitt presented information about a smart, funny seven year old boy with a big personality.

"Once we saw his picture, we knew," says Aaron, with Jeremy nodding in agreement, "We knew he was our son."

Aaron, Jeremy and Logan met, and began the next phase of their journey together. Logan began visiting their home, eventually for weekends.

"After just a couple overnight stays, the house felt empty when he wasn't there," says Aaron. Jeremy adds, "It just didn't feel right without him. A home is not supposed to feel empty."



Aaron, Logan and Jeremy

'Logan Day' was further enshrined when, after a year on adoption probation, it came time to request a court date to finalize the adoption legally. The family asked if June 30 was a possibility. As luck would have it the courts obliged given it was such a meaningful date.

Logan has three biological brothers and the plan was that there would be an openness arrangement with all the boys and the boys' biological parents.

What makes this story remarkable is the extent to which everyone has embraced the openness agreement. It is required that openness be considered for all public adoptions in Ontario. That openness can look very different depending on the specifics of each situation. It can range from exchanging letters or pictures, with no personal contact, right up to regular visits.

In Logan's case, the entire extended family is embracing openness to its fullest extent. Aaron and Jeremy met Logan's biological parents at their last visit with him.

They acknowledge it was awkward, but building and maintaining those ties was more important. Having them give their blessing to Logan was an amazing gift. Everyone truly has Logan's best interest at heart.

Each of the brothers is in various stages of their adoptions. The adoptive families for each of the boys along with their biological parents are all committed to sharing letters, video chatting and visiting in person. They are opening their hearts and families for all the boys.

Everyone involved knows that a strong support structure and family connections are in the boys' best interest. That support will be fundamental to the success of each of the adoptions and in ensuring a bright future for all the boys. Despite their fears and logistical challenges, everyone remains committed.

CONTINUED, ON NEXT PAGE

CELEBRATING A GOOD LIFE WITH LOGAN... CONTINUED

Logan didn't really get a new family as much as his family grew. Aaron and Jeremy's extended families are thrilled with the new addition. "Everyone has been very supportive," says Jeremy. "Logan was welcomed immediately. There were lots of screams and tears when we told our mothers."

Jeremy and Aaron emphasize that Logan's past is not over; it's part of who he is. "The past comes with you," says Aaron. "It is very important that we include photos of everyone in our wall of family photos. All the people from Logan's past are still very important and we want to always acknowledge that."

Logan's foster parents, Lucy and Dave Hudson are also key players in their journey. Their support and especially Lucy's assistance in planning was instrumental in ensuring a smooth and healthy transition as Logan moved into his new home. Sadly, Dave passed away last year, after Logan had moved. Logan faced that sad event courageously with the help of his family.

Before his adoption, Logan's forthright character was apparent when he was asked what he wanted in his future adoptive home. He said he wanted to live on a quiet street with a paved driveway.

He wanted to still eat grapes. And he stated confidently "I want a good life." He hasn't got that paved driveway yet, but he certainly does have a good life.

All the people from Logan's past are still very important and we want to always acknowledge that.

-Aaron & Jeremy

PURPLE RIBBON FOR CHILD ABUSE AWARENESS CELEBRATES 25 YEARS

Child Abuse Prevention Month is a national campaign held every October to inform the public about everyone's role in preventing child abuse. The campaign is known to many as the 'purple ribbon campaign.'

This year is a particularly significant year for the campaign and for Durham CAS. Twenty-five years ago Sue Sims, our Volunteer Coordinator at the time proposed using the purple ribbon for the campaign.

The first purple ribbons were distributed throughout Durham Region in October 1992; over the years, the purple ribbon has been adopted by organizations across Canada. The ribbons help us raise awareness about the issue of child abuse and the need for everyone to play a part in protecting our community's children.

Last year several schools, along with administrators and trustees of the Durham Catholic District School

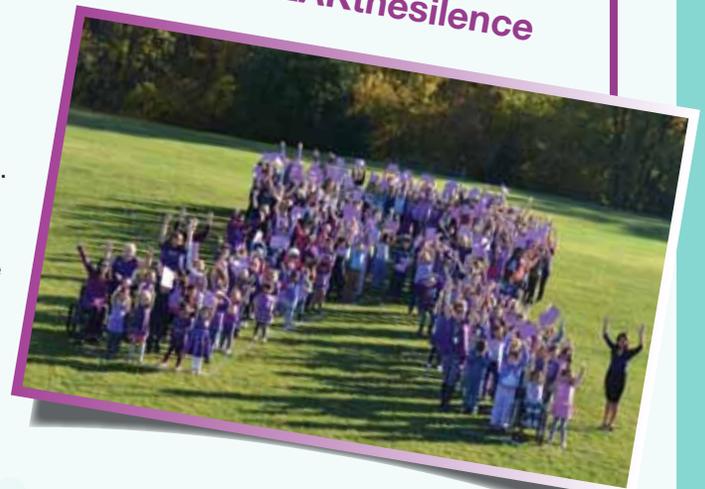
Board took part. This year we are looking forward to greater participation among all our local schools as they are key partners in protecting our community's children.

This year we are also hoping to expand the online component of the campaign. Join the campaign on social media with the hashtag #IBreakthesilence.

Get involved on Tuesday, October 24 as part of **Dress Purple Day**. Contact us for purple ribbons, wear purple, and share photos and messages on social media.

By wearing a purple ribbon, sharing information and helping raise awareness, you can make a difference.

#IBREAKthesilence



Staff and students at Sir Albert Love Catholic School, Oshawa helping to raise awareness on Go Purple Day 2016.





Brew savory

DURHAM'S
POP-UP
DINNER
SERIES

FOUNDRY KITCHEN & BAR

On Thursday, June 15th, the second Brewsavory Pop up Dinner event was facilitated at the mystery location of Purple Woods Conservation Area. The 65 guests were treated to a four-course meal prepared by the owner/executive chef - Steve Lovisa of The Foundry in Port Perry.

Wine pairings were provided by the Wine Guy and the beer pairings were provided by Old Flame Brewing Company. Special entertainment featured 13 year old Barrett Moore who sang an amazing rendition of Halejulah.

The proceeds raised from these events will towards supporting our most vulnerable children in Durham Region, those affiliated with the Durham Children's Aid Society. More specifically the monies raised will support the Foundation's new Mental Health and Wellness program.

For every \$150 raised from this event, one counselling session can be offered to a child or youth who requires immediate crisis assessment and intervention counselling. There are approximately 75 children who require this support in Durham Region.

The next Brewsavory event will be held at the end of October. Stay tuned for more details!



HOLIDAY HOPE PROGRAM

Help us put "Hope" back into the Holiday Season

On **November 1st, 2017** the Durham Children's Aid Foundation (DCAF) will launch its annual Holiday Hope gift hamper program, in support of 2000 children within Durham region. Each hamper includes an age-specific toy, an item of new clothing and a food voucher. The hampers are distributed to over 700 families across Durham throughout December.

Questions?

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FORE THE FUTURE GOLF CLASSIC: THANK YOU TO EVERYONE FOR YOUR SUPPORT

On Wednesday, June 7, 130 golfers came together in support of the 12th annual Fore the Future Golf Tournament held once again at Wooden Sticks Golf & Country Club.

The event raised over \$45,000 in support of the key signature programs that are facilitated by the Durham Children's Aid Foundation including: Summer Camp program,

Post-Secondary Bursaries and the new Youth Mentorship initiative that will be launched in the fall.

Special highlights included hearing from Youth Ambassador Shyanne Nichols who sits on the Board of the Foundation as she shared her fourth year thesis that focused on the challenges and misconceptions that youth face when they eventually

transition out of the care of the Children's Aid Society. *It should be noted that Shyanne received 100% on her thesis presentation.*

Thank you to all of our generous partners and sponsors of the 12th Annual Fore the Future Golf Classic!



12th Annual
Durham Children's Aid Foundation
**Fore the Future
Charity
GOLF
Classic**



Scholarship Sponsors

Grant Thornton
An instinct for growth™

On-Course Contest & Raffle Sponsors



Apprentice Sponsors



Printing Sponsor



Lunch Sponsor



Cart Sponsor



DURHAM SUPERHERO WALK

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 1ST, 2017

CORPORATE RELAY 4/5K CHALLENGE

9:00 AM - 10:30 AM

FAMILY FUN WALK - 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

**PURPLE WOODS
CONSERVATION AREA**

38 COATES ROAD EAST
OSHAWA

INDIVIDUALS

\$25

CHILDREN UNDER
5 ARE FREE

THE DURHAM SUPERHERO WALK IS A 5K FUN WALK THAT IS OPEN TO EVERYONE OF ALL AGES. OUR SUPERHEROES COME IN MANY SHAPES AND SIZES BUT THEY ALL FOLLOW WONDER WOMEN'S "AMAZON" CODE - GOVERN YOURSELVES WITH LOVE, KINDNESS AND SERVICE TO OTHERS.

THE DURHAM SUPERHERO WALK SUPPORTS OUR MOST VULNERABLE CHILDREN IN DURHAM REGION, THOSE AFFILIATED WITH THE DURHAM CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY.

HELD IN THE MONTH OF OCTOBER TO COMMEMORATE CHILD ABUSE AWARENESS MONTH, THE DURHAM COMMUNITY IS INVITED TO COME AND PARTICIPATE IN THIS ANNUAL EVENT. EVERY CHILD NEEDS A SUPERHERO- FROM SOCIAL WORKERS, TEACHERS, POLICE OFFICERS, FIREFIGHTERS, PARAMEDICS TO COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS.

HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT THIS EVENT?

REGISTER AS A PARTICIPANT OR BETTER YET ENTER THE CORPORATE/TEAM RELAY CHALLENGE AND START FUNDRAISING - SET A FUNDRAISING GOAL AND HELP OUR COMMUNITY'S MOST VULNERABLE CHILDREN. THE IMPACT IS GREAT AND EVERY DOLLAR RAISED MAKES A SUPERHERO IMPACT.

BECOME AN EVENT SPONSOR - THERE ARE MANY OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUSINESSES TO SPONSOR THIS UNIQUE EVENT AND DEMONSTRATE THEIR SUPERPOWERS.



YOUR IMPACT - SHAZAM!

• FOR **\$50**, WE CAN PUT TOGETHER A 24 HOUR EMERGENCY CARE BACKPACK FOR CHILDREN COMING INTO CARE

• FOR **\$100**, WE CAN PUT TOGETHER A GIFT HAMPER FOR AN INDIVIDUAL CHILD/YOUTH TO HELP PUT HOPE BACK IN THE HOLIDAY SEASON (EACH HAMPER IS MADE UP OF CLOTHING, TOYS AND A GROCERY GIFT CARD)

• FOR **\$170**, WE CAN SEND ONE CHILD TO A WEEK OF SUMMER CAMP

• FOR **\$400**, WE CAN PROVIDE A GIFT HAMPER FOR A DESERVING FAMILY DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON

• FOR **\$1500** WE CAN PROVIDE A BURSARY FOR A YOUTH AS THEY EMBARK ON THEIR POST-SECONDARY JOURNEY



FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO REGISTER, PLEASE CONTACT:

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