



Robert Henderson and Julie Moreton enjoy bowling with the community every Wednesday morning.

# Just Like Family

Story and Photos by Tristan Urry



Henderson and Moreton price books at Salvation Army Thrift Store every Tuesday and Thursday.



Henderson wears her "Fruitcake" bracelet everyday. Henderson received it from Moreton as a gift.

When you think of volunteer work, you most likely don't picture someone with a disability doing it.

Support worker Robert Moreton thinks that "everyone needs to be desensitized to people with disabilities and they need to realize that there is a real person in there and they have a lot to say and a lot to contribute."

Moreton has been a support worker for Community Living in Belleville and Area for the last 25 years and during that time, he has worked with many individuals and formed unique bonds with every single one of them.

But the longest-lasting bond would be with Julie Henderson. Henderson was born blind and quadriplegic and she has been a client with Community Living since she was 21 and she is now 35. Henderson's parents thought it would be best if Julie could live her own life and get out of the house like most normal adults at that age do. Moreton has been her main support worker for the past ten years.

Henderson and Moreton have volunteered at local thrift shops together two days a week for the past decade.

"Volunteerism really gives us a sense of self-esteem because it means that you are part of something and it's your way of giving back. Julie definitely values that role," says Moreton.

The agency follows the 21 outcomes, and those 21 are then put into three categories such as: My Self: Who I am as a result of my unique heredity, life experiences and decisions, My World: Where I work, live, socialize, belong or connect, and My Dreams: How I want my life to be.

Moreton says he believes that all 21 outcomes are important to help make sure each individual lives a normal life. One of the main outcomes, says Moreton, is providing opportunities that mean something to the individual.

"People need to have meaningful days and what's meaningful to me isn't necessarily what's meaningful to you or what's meaningful for Julie. It could be as simple as bowling in a non-segregated area with other non-handicapped members from the community," says Moreton.

Henderson loves to be in water whether it's the local YMCA pool or Canada's Wonderland waterpark "she swims like a fish" says Moreton.

Henderson swims at the YMCA weekly and she has made a lot of friends there. All of the life guards know her and she knows them.

It is very important to give each individual a variety of choices so they can decide for themselves what they want, he adds.

"There are never two choices, because that isn't a choice. It's a dilemma as to which one, so it's at least three to four choices.

"The most important thing of what we do here is that we don't just look at people as someone we are just going to look after. But we look at them as our friends," says Moreton.

Henderson comes up with nicknames for the people she considers to be closest to her and Moreton acquired the nickname of Mr. Fruitcake with in the first year of working with her. "It always has to be Mr. Fruitcake, he's the only one that I want to have help me. No one else is as good as him, he is family" Henderson stated.

"Yes, I may be paid staff, but Julie is a friend and, much more than that, she is family... and the highest honour is to be considered as family by them as well."



Moreton and Henderson enjoy going to a book club at the Belleville Library every Monday. They always walk out with smiles on their faces.



Moreton and Henderson come up for air with smiles on their faces. Henderson loves going under water.