



An Email Changed Our Lives Forever - Angela's Story

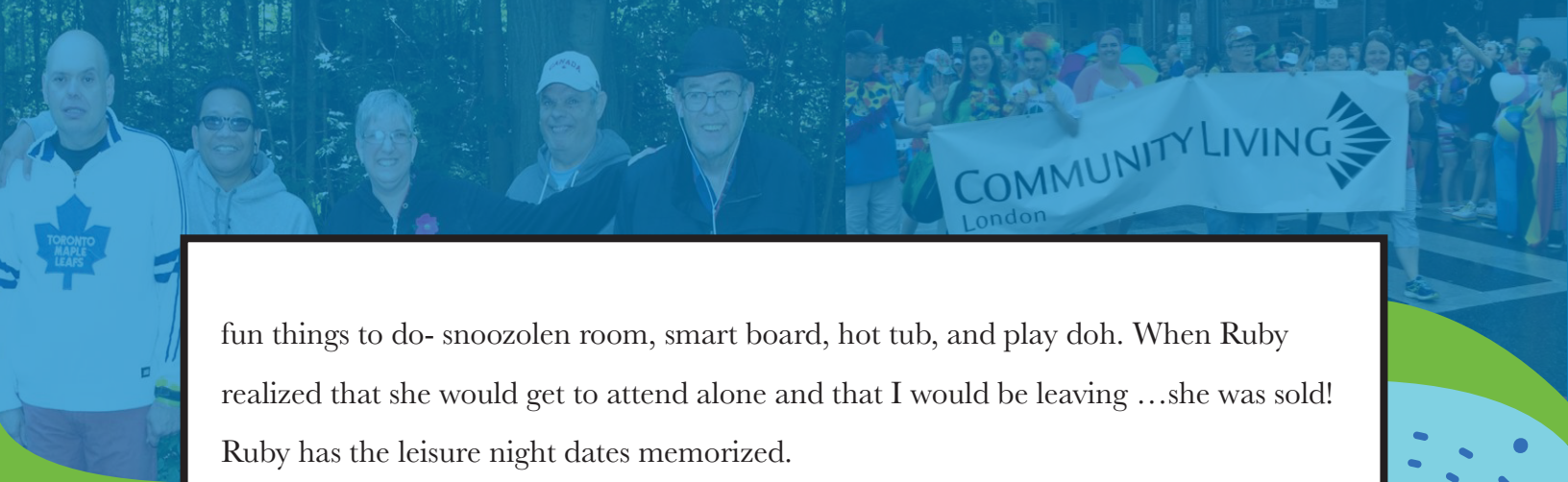
Like most families our household is crazy, busy, and chaotic to say the least. On top of the typical challenges a family brings- we have a handful of unique routines and rituals that add to our crazy day. Our daughter Ruby is 11 years old and has Autism.

When Ruby was a very little girl, we had the same visions of ballerinas, birthday parties and slumber parties that most new parents have when they bring a beautiful little girl into the world. By the time Ruby was 3 yrs. old our visions of tutus and squealing girls had turned into a reality of endless appointments, ABA, visual schedules and learning to speak in “first and then sentences”. Ruby’s diagnosis of Autism and eventually intellectual disability changed our whole outlook on raising this sweet girl and our entire family dynamics changed.

As school started and progressed, Ruby was a very popular kid. The kids loved to be her special helper-play with her and all her toys on the playground.

As grade 3 &4 went by, naturally Rubys peers’ interests were changing and it wasn’t always their priority to play alongside Ruby. As the other girls were becoming more interested in sophisticated play and conversations, Ruby was starting to linger in the background a lot and relying on adult relationships for socializing and playing.

Then one day, the email came about a program called Leisure Nights at Community Living London. During our first initial visit to the centre, we were shown all the



fun things to do- snoozolen room, smart board, hot tub, and play doh. When Ruby realized that she would get to attend alone and that I would be leaving ...she was sold! Ruby has the leisure night dates memorized.

Just the anticipation of the night ahead helps us get through our weekend.

For my husband and I it is an amazing feeling to see her run into the building, with a group of kids her own age and be herself- totally accepted for who she is. Her interesting sound effects, movements and speech do not stand out and she thinks she is pretty cool going out on the town with her peers and NO parents.

We don't only have visions of ABA and DR's appointments, speech therapy, music therapy, and art therapy we just see our 11-year-old girl just being an 11-year-old girl.

The 3 hours twice a month give my husband and I a chance to have 1:1 time with our 13 yrs. old son, go out for supper to a restaurant other than pizza hut (Ruby's favourite right now) and My visa card loves going to Masonville Mall. It's a win win for us all. With all the uncertainties families living with Autism are facing right now with government support-The ASD leisure nights program is one safe consistent support we have right now and we are forever grateful to Community Living London for giving Ruby and our family this opportunity.