



ASD Leisure Nights

At Community Living London we believe that all people of any age have the right to be and feel fully included in their community.

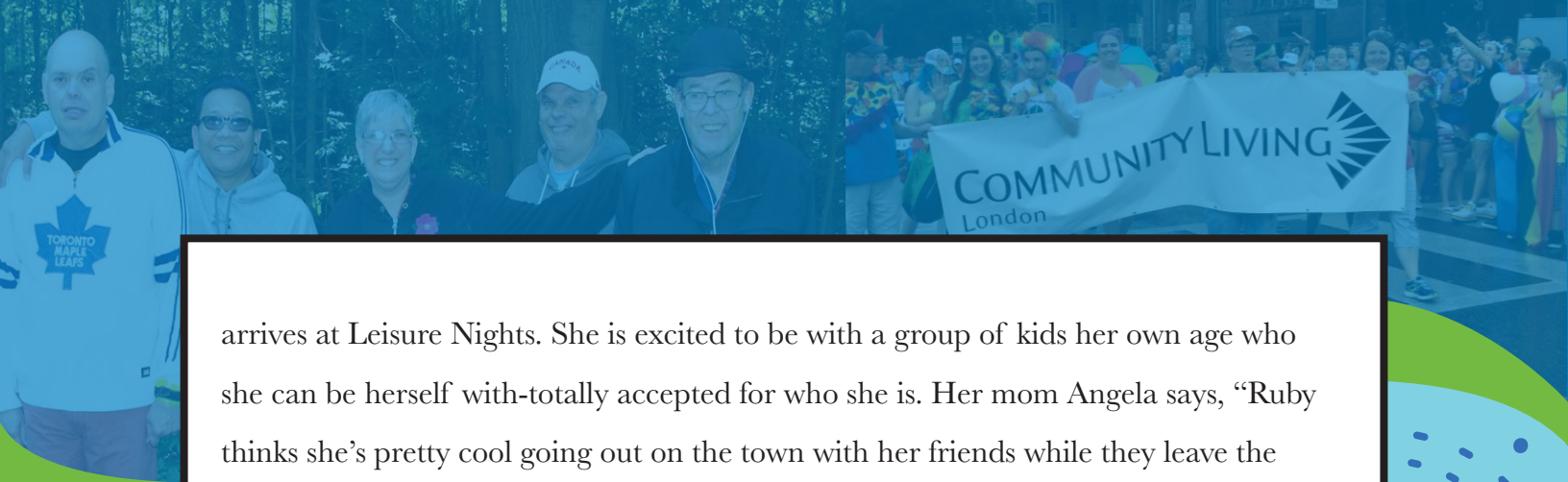
“Community Living London supports families with different needs but they all have one thing in common; they are all looking for ways to keep their children engaged and a part of their community.” Michele Iacobelli, Leisure Nights Coordinator

The Leisure Nights program is offered by Community Living London and facilitates social, recreational and skill building activities for children and youth ages 7-17 who are within the Autism Spectrum. Activities include bowling, laser tag, hikes at the park, the arcade and so much more. Currently, this is the only program of its kind in London.

For a child with a developmental disability spending time with peers “just like them” is an experience that provides friendship, independence, a sense of belonging and produces big smiles. For parents, this time provides the comfort of knowing their child is safe and taken care of in the hands of trained and trustworthy professionals.

Recently we had the opportunity to speak with some incredible moms who shared their children’s excitement about their experiences at Leisure Nights.

Ruby, who is 11, cannot wait to jump out of the car and join her friends when she



arrives at Leisure Nights. She is excited to be with a group of kids her own age who she can be herself with-totally accepted for who she is. Her mom Angela says, “Ruby thinks she’s pretty cool going out on the town with her friends while they leave the parents behind”.

For 10 year old Sofia, Leisure Nights provides an opportunity for her to exert her independence and spend time with friends. Sarah, Sofia's mother, has confidence in the care being provided for her daughter as the staff are so knowledgeable and have a vast experience with people on the Autism Spectrum. Sarah uses the precious hours to run some errands (including a big shop for the family) and loves the extra time to enjoy a hot coffee too!

For 14 year old Jack, Leisure Nights is ‘boy’s night’. The evening begins with a stop at the drive thru to pick up dinner and the moment he and his mom Kelly arrive at the centre, Jack is out of the car ready to enjoy his meal with his friends and hang out in the hot tub. “It’s important to remember, at the end of the day, they are just kids” Kelly noted.

Then at 18, life changes for these families. Their children are no longer eligible to attend Leisure Nights due to funding requirements. This is a difficult transition for not only the child, but the family as well.

Moms Carla and Lisa shared with us the anxiety they felt about this moment since their children turned 17.



“Leisure Nights fits with our family”, Lisa said to me. Her son Joseph is 19 years old and no longer eligible for the program. This has been a big transition and made an impact on their family. Thursday nights are not the same anymore. Joseph still attends school, and Lisa looks daily to find new opportunities to keep Joseph engaged in the community and not at home on a consistent basis.

Mitchel turned 18 last month, and instead of celebrating his next step into adulthood, Carla dreaded the day and worried about the change in his routine. She also worried about how his anxiety and the stress of figuring out what to do next would affect her own health. She sent this note to the staff at Leisure Nights:

“We cannot thank you enough for the many years you have supported Mitchel. This program has been a second home and family to him. Thank you for caring so deeply for him and for giving us the much needed respite.”

Community Living London is piloting “Club at the Hub”, an adult version of the Leisure Nights program. This program will give Carla and Lisa their “Thursday nights” back and relieve the anxiety that Kelly, Angela, and Sarah feel about their children turning 18. For Joseph and Mitchel, they can be with their friends again and away from their parents for even a few hours. Currently, the cost of the pilot will be covered through registration. With your donation, we will be able to decrease the cost to families and make it accessible and affordable for all.

Your donation to Community Living London will directly impact real people, and real families, who count on Community Living London to keep their children safe



and smiling. For more information on Leisure Nights and Club at the Hub, please contact Barb Furac at 519-686-3000.

Help Community Living London do what it does best-inspire possibilities!