



# Canadian National Autism Foundation

August 2009 Newsletter

Issue 5B

## Inside This Issue

Page 1

- \* Foundation Goals & Mission Statement
- \* Upcoming Events
- \* Concert Sponsors

Page 2

- \* Hamilton Autism Walk-A-Thon Information

Page 3

- \* Exciting News about our New Partners

Page 4-6

- \* A Personal Account of Living with Asperger's Syndrome

Page 5

- \* How to Contact Us
- \* How you can Help
- \* In the Next Issue

## Foundation Goals

The objectives of the Canadian National Autism Foundation are charitable. The Canadian National Autism Foundation has been formed to provide funding for:

- \* Educating the general public and professionals;
- \* Providing information and resources to families of children with autism;
- \* Providing funding for Canadian based research and development; and
- \* Promoting national autism awareness

## Mission Statement

The Canadian National Autism Foundation promotes the positive improvement and quality of life for people with autism in Canada.

## **WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY CONCERT**

**Friday, October 16, 2009**

Studio at Hamilton Place, 1 Summers Lane

**TICKETS \$40.00 each**

**Get them now do not miss out**

**Show Time 7:00-10:30 pm**

**Special Appearances by**

**Rik Emmett**

**Sab (the original Rock & Roll Outlaw)**

**Victoria Boland & Andrew Rudd**

**Upcoming  
Events**

**We would also like to recognize and thank our World Autism Awareness Day Concert Sponsors:**



OPSEU Local 256  
Hamilton Paramedics



Sleeman  
Breweries Ltd.

**RAYMOND JAMES**  
Investment Dealers Toronto

Hamilton City Councillors

**Brad Clark Ward 9**

**Terry Whitehead Ward 8**

**Dave Mitchell Ward 10**



**Mike Taylor & Family (Taylor Steel), Wanda Jess**

**MEDIA SPONSORS: Hamilton Community News, Z103.5 and Wave 94.7**

Mailing Address: 1227 Barton Street East, PO Box 47577, Hamilton, Ontario, L8H 2V0  
Phone: 905-643-7183 Fax: 905-643-0969

# HAMILTON AUTISM WALK-A-THON

THE CANADIAN NATIONAL AUTISM FOUNDATION

In Partnership with

HAMILTON THE CITY OF WATERFALLS-CHRIS ECKLUND

September 20<sup>TH</sup> @ Christie Conservation Area

There will be no rain date    Pre-registration 11:00 A.M.    Walk begins at 11:30 A.M.



Canadian National Autism Foundation

HAMILTON  
*the City of Waterfalls*

Welcome to the Waterfall Capital of the World!

## Other Walk-A-Thon Information

Please go to [www.cnaf.net](http://www.cnaf.net) for all registration, information and pledge forms.

There will be CNAF Autism merchandise to purchase as well our CNAF Partner Disability Hub will be selling jewelry with a % to the CNAF

Please bring this form with the money pledged on the morning of the Hamilton Autism Walk-a-thon or mail 2 weeks prior to the walk.

Collect all money in advance and turn it in at registration or mail 2 weeks prior to the walk.

Please go to our website for pre-registration [www.cnaf.net](http://www.cnaf.net) or to our partner, Hamilton the City of Waterfalls [www.cityofwaterfalls.ca](http://www.cityofwaterfalls.ca)

Everyone must please register everyone who will be participating and getting pledges, children 3 and under are exempt from getting pledges. Registering helps us to plan for the walk.

Everyone is welcome to participate but please be aware that it is a walking trail and will be difficult for those with wheel chairs or strollers.

There will be 2 adult mountain bikes given out for the top male and top female, that bring in the highest amount of sponsorship.

Enjoy a complimentary barbeque, and pizza for the participants.

Additional activities provided for the children, including sensory area, and a clown and much more.

## Sponsors

Special thank you to our sponsors: Zellers (Hamilton Upper James and Ancaster Meadowlands), Chris Ecklund, Jeremy Shortt Photography, Comic Connection, Boston Pizza (Hamilton Main West), Eagle Press Printers, Disability Hub (CNAF Partner), and Giggles The Clown



895 King Street West  
Hamilton, Ontario  
Canada, L8S 1K5  
(905)-522-2357



Charitable Organization #867189243 RR001

# EXCITING NEWS

We also have a new pay pal account for donations set up on our face book and our website

Check out our new Face book Group <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=46638352369>

And our Face book events <http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=55869994993>

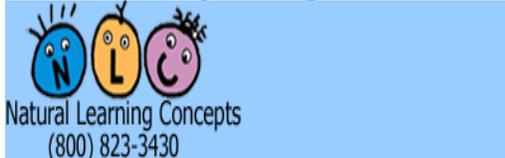
## OUR NEW PARTNER

Disability Hub <http://www.disabilityhub.com/>



## OUR NEW ON GOING COMMUNITY SUPPORTERS

### Natural Learning Concepts (New York)



The Foundation will be receiving funds from the NLC with every order made directly from our website to help us in raising funds

### The Voice of Diaspora (Hamilton)



Will be helping us with new immigrant families coming into Canada looking for information and support, we will then help these families with information about services for their children with Autism.



The Foundation will be receiving funds from the Links For Love with every sale made directly from our website to help us in raising funds

## NEW CNAF AUTISM MERCHANDISE

Order it on Pay Pal through our Website at [www.cnaf.net](http://www.cnaf.net)



**Autism Awareness Bag**  
Made from 100% Organic Cotton  
Measures 14" X 16"  
(same on both sides)



**Autism Awareness Pen**  
(blue ink)  
(CNAF & multi-colour puzzle pieces)

## **Interesting Information ~ A Good Read**

### **This article has been written by a 21 year old with Aspergers**

(It is included without any modifications in the author's own words)

---

It has come to my attention that the awareness campaigns about Aspergers Syndrome have not worked. There are still not many people seem to have a clue how Aspergers Syndrome affects individuals. It isn't possible to get through to the ignorant members of the public but it is possible to teach the misinformed. I'm going to take this chance to explain to readers all the things that they should know about Aspergers Syndrome in particular and how it is different from Autism.

Aspergers Syndrome and Autism are two slightly different disorders. Although they aren't classified separately they should be. I'm actually offended when people call me Autistic because I'm not on that part of the spectrum. I'm able to adapt to normality. An Autistic person would be unable to function in normal settings. I do get the sensory issues arising occasionally but not a badly as when I was younger. Even though I have sensitivity to noises of a certain pitch I'm still able to participate in karaoke on Thursday nights at a local pub. It's very important that people don't get the two disorders mixed up. If I had Autism I'd certainly not be doing anything like that. I love people and want to socialise but to an Autistic people are like objects only there when they require them. They don't want to socialise unless they are High Functioning Autistic which is in the middle between the two sides of the spectrum. Imagine a line which starts at Autistic, then in the middle has High Functioning Autism and then on the far end Aspergers Syndrome. That is the easiest way to remember the difference. The further down the line you go the less severely affected the individual. The characteristics of Aspergers Syndrome are problems with social interactions, difficulties with communicating and rigid thought patterns. Whereas the characteristics of Autism is active but odd behaviour, appearing to be passive and aloof, no desire to socialise or communicate. The only similarities to the two parts of the spectrum are obsessive, ritual behaviour and dislike of change. It can be very confusing to all affected by an Autistic Spectrum Disorder. The best way I can explain it to someone who knows nothing is its like being drunk at times. Everything seems so close because the senses of people with AS are more sensitive than the average persons. A mass full of sights, sounds, people and places just seem to come at you in major way. It's like having an abstract brain. Unlike neuro typicals who can see everything as a whole object I find that I only can focus at one person, thing or task at a time. I only see what I'm focusing on not anything around it. If I'm focusing on a person it's like they are the only person in the room at that moment in time.

I also want to clear up another assumption made by the general public. Aspergers Syndrome isn't a disease or a mental illness. It's classed as a condition or disorder. It is also part of an individual's personality. We don't require medication for the actual condition. The only reason that we get prescribed medication is for additional conditions that accompany it like anxiety or depression. There is no cure it's a life long disorder. You're born with it and you'll die with it. This doesn't give individuals with the disorder a disadvantage in any way. Institutionalisation is only an option that could be temporary or permanent depending on the individuals needs. It is possible to live a completely normal life like any neuro typical person. They can get their own place, job, relationships and kids. I'm able to drive a car. I passed my test when I was about 18 years old first time. I have average intelligence like most of the population. It takes a lot more effort to achieve those things but the goals that neuro typical people have are still achievable by people with ASDs.

On a personal note I would just like to say Thank you to everyone locally who has supported me, mostly to the people who run (and the former owners) and drink at the pub where I sing on the karaoke. I could never have become what I am today without you all. You'll never know how much you all mean to me. All of you have kept me strong throughout some difficult times. The times when I'm feeling like rubbish you cheer me up. I know most of your faces even if I can't recall your names. I see you all as an extended family. I know that I'll never really fit in because I'm an outsider but it's nice to have known you all. I know that one day I'm going to have to move again. I can't stay round here because I come from Leicestershire. I don't want to leave you all but eventually I'll have to move away. This is not due to personal choice but to funding issues. I wish you all the best of luck. I probably will be back to visit but it depends what happens in my future. Who knows? I might end up singing for a living. The key is never taking anything too seriously. I find that the best things happen by accident. I have made all my most important friendships by accident. The most ironic thing is that if I hadn't made the mistakes to get put down here I'd never have met the most amazing people. I feel guilty for things that happened in my past every day. It just goes to show that everything happens for a reason. Regardless whether that reason is good or bad, life has a way of leading you in a certain direction. I have learnt to just make the best out of a bad situation. I also find that when things change it's better to just go with the flow rather than fight it. Sometimes life can be very painful but it's always for the best. It hurts at the time but when you look back you find that it's made you a stronger person. I've moved around a lot and also been through a lot as some of you may know and it's changed me as a person. I've learnt to put up a barrier so that nothing can hurt me. I tend to not think about the future or dwell on the past because what matters is the present. I probably do say the wrong thing to people several times a day without realising. I am sorry to people that I may have upset by accident. There have been people who have said nasty spiteful things to me because I'm different. I use those comments to improve myself. I lost a lot of weight through remembering those comments. The nasty comments that people have said to me are basically my motivation to be better, thinner and stronger. If those people knew what it is like to live in the place I live they'd be a little more sensitive. I am patient most of the time with the environment but sometimes it does make me a little annoyed. I've learnt to cope in the environment that I live in now but it's taken a long time. I do care about people which is the reason why I run the website for Aspergers Syndrome. Since the age of 17 I have been running the thing regardless of the problems in my life. I can't actually feel love in a conventional sense because of my condition but I'd give my life for someone else. I'm that committed to what I do and put 100% in to every single thing I do.

I fight the challenges my disability makes me face with people daily with all the strength I have inside me. I won't ever give up fighting for the things that I believe in. I just wanted to explain what it was like to have Aspergers Syndrome hoping that people will listen. They have a personal choice whether they want to listen I'm not trying to force them.

If you would like to visit AS Support Group Online please log on to <http://www.assupportgrouponline.co.uk>

## **Life up until 21**

I was born in Leicestershire and lived there until the age of 18. During that time a lot happened to me because of how my Aspergers Syndrome affected me. I was a very quiet little girl whom never wanted to interact with anyone. Totally the opposite to what I'm like nowadays. I love people now. It was and still is sometimes like having a bubble surrounding you that no one else can enter. I liked to interact with people older than me but not my own age group. One thing that always made me happy was music. I first started listening to my parents CD's that was music from the 60s and 70s. I went through a period of liking ABBA music. I was a fan of the spice girls when they were around.

Started Primary school at five years old back in a small town called Burbage in Leicestershire. While I was there I had a very bad accident as a bully pushed me over in the cloakroom. I was bending over to tie my shoe lace up, this girl came up behind me and pushed me head first downwards. I smacked into the concrete floor, my forehead took the worse of it. A massive lump came up straight away. I still have a little bit of a lump there today and still get headaches there. Shortly after that I started having Epileptic seizures. I woke up screaming and shaking then my left side went dead for about half an hour after them. I had lost all my grand parents by the age of 10. I went to Brownies and Guides when I was younger. I surprisingly fitted in there as the girls were all really welcoming. Always wanted to be on the stage when I was younger. I became a different person when I was either singing or acting in school performances. When I walked on that stage I became a different person.

In 1999 I moved up to secondary school back in the little town I came from Burbage in Leicestershire. I was verbally bullied there. I was very settled in year 7 before all the problems began that went on throughout the rest of my life. I couldn't grasp Maths or Science. They were my worse subjects at school. I always got put in the bottom sets where all the idiots who didn't want to learn were because of my difficulties. The schools thought I was thick because of the way I was socially. I was intelligent but couldn't show it. The bottom sets had the bullies in them so I got targeted worse because of that. I also didn't have the capacity to learn any other language. I tried German and French but didn't get anywhere. I was good at computers but when I was at school we never did I.T very much. The school I went to had a computer room but not I.T lessons. I got involved with the drama teacher. I used to write letters to her because we had found that was the best way that I could communicate. I just got nasty with her because of my frustration of not being able to communicate eventually. After her the head teacher took over trying to help me by letting me skip lessons in her office. I used to do jobs for her and generally help out in her office. She gave me permission to miss Geography lessons. I also managed to get out of P.E which I hated because like many people with Aspergers my motor skills made me unable to enjoy it. I ended up coming to blows with her too. During helping her out on Activities week in year 9 I got angry with something she said. Pushed all the things off her desk and stormed out of school. When I got back she'd excluded me for two weeks. I missed the end of year disco and the variety show which I was in.

The high school that I went to when I was fourteen was hell. It was in a neighbouring village near Burbage back in Leicestershire. All the people I had made friends with had gone to the other school locally in Hinckley. I was not only bullied verbally there but also physically as well. I overheard a very horrible comment made by one of the girls 'nice figure but shame about the face'. Those were the comments I had to put up with daily. I lived in constant fear of being pushed down the stairs and being kicked the shit out of. Science classes contained a lot of bullying. When I leaned across the table one day a boy prodded a chair leg up my bum. He also tried to strangle me with bull dog wires. The teachers of the school couldn't control the students at all. I did get help from the SENCO department occasionally but after Leicestershire's funding for schools were dropped I had to cope on my own. I was told that I would need a special needs statement. They took 6 months to come through so it wasn't worth it as I was leaving school before that. I turned to yet another woman who was the special education needs co-ordinator. She used to work at my secondary school. I wrote too many letters yet again mainly because when the bullying got worse I wrote more. That was the worse school I had ever been too. It made it worse that I just had my hair cut really short and didn't like it. Some boy stuck chewing gum in it once, I had to cut it out. The final thing that got me expelled from that school was when me and a friend from the year above me were skiving lessons. We scribbled very rude some rather disgusting messages on the toilet cubicle wall. After that the principal banned us from hanging around together at school. He threatened that if he saw us together he would instantly expell me. He did see us together and expelled me not her. I wasn't allowed to do many GCSE's and because of lack of schooling I got absolutely awful grades. The principal actually called me a mental nutcase to my face.

I was finally diagnosed with Aspergers Syndrome at 16 by the Birmingham Forensic mental health team because I'd be arrested for harassment over the years. I then went to a local college after having a year out of education. I went on a special needs course called Pathfinders. The work was quite easy for me as all we did was key skills. I did carry on the behaviour though. I used to email the tutor so much. It was over the top but at the time I didn't realise that. I found her address during the Summer which was a major mistake. I wrote to her a lot. To top it all off thinking I was saying sorry for what I had done I sent her flowers and chocolates which everyone else say as weird. The college wouldn't have me back that September even though I tried so many things to sort it out. They gave me an ultimatum saying that if I emailed this tutor one more time about anything I'd be kicked out. I made that mistake because I knew that I couldn't stick to the contract. I told them that so I just had to accept that I was going to fail and lose everything. I tried to get revenge on this woman a few months later. The same girl whom helped graffiti the toilets with me came on msn and told me this tutor was going on holiday to New York. We devised a plan to get the tutor arrested for carrying a bomb. I emailed the airport a tip off. I got arrested for a bomb hoax which wasn't my intention at all. That's the way the world sees it though. The police confiscated my computer to gather evidence off of it. I did get away with that one because I explained my reasoning behind it so they put all the charges on hold.

I then decided that I'd take the residential college option that was recommended for me by the people who diagnosed me. There are things in Somerset that happened which I want to keep private. Only a few close friends know what went on up there with me personally. I used to be a common tart up there which got me into trouble but I don't want to say anymore. All I can say is that it haunts me every single day of my life. I carried on the behaviour with the head of care because that's how I dealt with my problems. I had the confidence to audition for the X factor although I got nowhere but it was very fun. The things that happened when I was in Somerset really screwed me up mentally which led to the events that led me to where I am today. I got kicked out of that college. I went mad one night. Took my Dad's car as I'd passed my test at the beginning of that year. Drove down to Somerset from Leicestershire and called the head of care when I got there. Took lots of painkillers and then eventually drove back to Leicestershire with tears rolling down my face. When I got back I was arrested. They kept me in a cell for two days then I got taken to court. From court I ended up at Milton Park Hospital in Wyboston. I was there for almost a year then moved to a residential home ran by the same company where I am now. I currently studying for a National Diploma in Media at Bedford College. Although my past has been terrible I wouldn't be as understanding and accepting as I am today if it hadn't happened. I admit that I didn't used to be a very nice person. I now have a book out that you can buy from my website which talks about my life in depth. I am hoping to get it published soon but it depends on many factors, from personal to financial. I've sold a few copies purely by online sales since November alone. I get people saying that they either don't have the internet or don't trust buying things over the internet. I had the chance to be on BBC Three but I said I didn't want to do it at the last minute. I'll probably regret it but at the time I didn't want cameras intruding in my life. I was coming off my medication and I didn't want any mood swing moments being captured. I'm off all my medication now. Every day is a struggle but I cope with it without medication. I'm happier now than I've ever been as I've lost weight, met lots of amazing some slightly strange people and have been in love. I can't feel love in a conventional sense but at least I know what it's like to be in love even if those relationships didn't work out.

### **Extra Points for the Article**

I don't wish to make enemies locally because to be honest I've been through enough hostile situations to last me a life time. I have heard through official channels that I'm allowed to move into a flat in this local area. I hope that I can make some good friends round St Neots and the surrounding area over the years. I know that I can get on people's nerves a lot but it's not like I ever mean to actually annoy them. I sometimes try to hard because I know that I have to compensate for my lack of social capacity. I just want to make sure that everyone knows that I'm not a person who has any malicious intent before I move into the area permanently. I'm open to a point about my past and my life in general. I don't make it a secret that I am bi sexual. I won't ever tell anyone who I fancy locally though because that's my business. I know that I have made a lot of mistakes publically and let things out by accident but then that shows how socially clumsy I can be. I only say what I feel out loud without thinking and I don't think how it may affect the other person. I did lie a lot in my past but if anything I'm normally too honest now. I learnt that there was no point in lying to everyone as it just makes you miserable. The past few years have changed me in so many ways. The things going around about my past have got seriously bad recently. As much as I want privacy to finally live a normal life I had to put it straight in the newspaper. If I hadn't been so open about my life since the age of 17 when I started AS Support Group Online I don't think it would have helped other people with the same thing. I sacrificed my privacy to help others really. I let the media follow my life in a variety of ways over the years. I'm not sure when I'll finally hang up this campaigning/awareness stuff because I actually enjoy it. I want to hang up the karaoke mic for good but I can't do that either. I just have a drive deep inside me to keep at it all. There are people out there that are so much better than me. I'm lucky that I'm multi talented. I also use my looks as well for getting publicity to help with the awareness side of things. The trick is to always come up with something new that is going to shock people. I'm always thinking of new things and I'm never afraid to go to the extremes. I've been dealing with ignorant people for years; getting their attention is one hell of a challenge sometimes. At the moment I am going through a difficult time with feeling very depressed. I have no reason to really but that's just the way it goes sometimes. I think about my past a lot. There's a lot that I will never forgive myself for and I feel that I deserve to be haunted by it for the rest of my life. If I do end up either going completely mentally ill and have to be locked up for the rest of my life I hope that the people in the outside world will learn from the mistakes I made. I'm going to get my autobiography published properly eventually. It's available off lulu.com at the moment. The link to buy it is on the website that I run. I have to save up the money to have it published properly. I may have a past that makes me look like I'd harm someone but it wasn't like how people may have heard. Basically all it boils down to is the fact that I have always found it easier to communicate in writing. I got into trouble for harassment because of that. As far as I'm like with people if I like them then I will stick up for them. I'd do anything for anyone as long as they treated me alright and didn't take the mickey out of me. I am very over protective if someone messes with someone who I am fond of or close to. There are some people who I will let in easily because I see them as trustworthy but others whom I keep at arms length because I feel they have hidden intentions. I'll be your friend for life but I can also be your worse enemy for life. I only have two feelings towards people, a strong love for them or a strong hate. There's nothing in between for me because that is how I think. I am technically a normal person just programmed different socially. I had someone ask me whether it was like being downs syndrome, no it's not because that is someone who may have brain damage and has other physical problems with it caused by chromosome abnormalities. I'm not brain damaged as far as I know. I had a bad accident at school where I did get a head injury but that wouldn't explain anything to do with Aspergers Syndrome. The cause of Aspergers Syndrome is unknown. There is a lot of speculation in to the cause of Autism in general because of various research studies that have been done by 'professionals'. It could have been the MMR injection which I had myself. It also could have been chemicals in the world around us while we were still developing as babies. The accident at school that I had probably didn't help. I don't think they'll ever find out the reason why we're like this. I don't think it's worth placing the blame on anything because it happened and now we just have to deal with it because we have no choice. You can either accept it as a gift or a curse. If you don't want to live your life in denial and bitterness then accept it as a gift. There are still bad days but sometimes you even forget that you're not like the neurotypicals that you hang around with. I've lived my life in bitterness and anger for years because I wanted to be normal but now I've realised that I have to make the best of who I am. I can't be like other people however hard I wish to be like them.

By Em Lucy Thomson

## How to Contact Us

### ***Mailing Address***

1227 Barton Street East,  
PO Box 47577  
Hamilton, Ontario  
L8H 2V0

### ***Phone Number***

905-643-7183

### ***Fax Number***

905-643-0969

### ***Email Address***

info@cnafe.net

### ***Website Address***

www.cnafe.net

### ***Charitable Organization***

#867189243 RR0001

## How You Can Help

As a charitable organization, the Canadian National Autism Foundation strives to raise funds to achieve our goals and it is with the support of generous organizations, companies and people that we are able to put together fundraising events such as those we have had in the past in order to raise the funding needed.

At this time we are looking for financial support, and this can come in various forms:

- Sponsorship of portions of our events
- Donations of prizes for our events
- Purchase of tickets to our events
- Financial contributions directly towards our goals (i.e. research)
- Hold an Autism Awareness Day at your establishment
- Casual Dress Days
- Payroll Deductions
- Host a Golf Tournament or Hockey Tournament
- Sponsor or run a Walk-a-thon
- And any other great ideas that you may have, big or small!



### Ongoing Fundraisers

Do you buy books about Autism or any other topics online?  
Buy them through the Amazon.ca link on our site, and the CNAF will receive a percentage of your sale from Amazon.ca

### Disclaimer

The Canadian National Autism Foundation (CNAF) does not support, endorse or recommend any method, treatment, product, program or person for people suffering with autism spectrum disorders. The goal of our site and our responses to your questions is to provide accurate and up-to-date information about autism spectrum disorders. We believe everyone has the right to access all of the information available to them, allowing them to make their own individual choice.