



## People







Antonet Orlando  
Executive Director, Meta Centre

There is no higher calling in terms of a career than public service that offers a chance to make a difference in people's lives and improve the world. Meta Centre celebrates its 30 years of support by recognizing long-standing years of service.



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## Years of Service

In February, we honored 61 of our 2016 long standing service award recipients. This was an opportunity to thank our employees for their service in the pursuit of excellence for the care and support given to our clientele. All Meta Centre employees deserve recognition and appreciation. I express my heartfelt gratitude to the staff of our residential, day, respite, supported independent living, human resources, finance, property management, administration, social work, and management teams. All have played a role in successfully carrying out the mission of the organization: to continuously support the preservation of the rights and dignity of people with special needs and their presence and full inclusion in our

community. An organization is only as good as its staff. In this regard, we are blessed! Our employees' dedication and commitment to quality services is an integral part of our success. We recognize and appreciate the outstanding contributions of our long-time staff members. The lives of people with special needs are enriched because of them; it's commitment to their happiness and dedication to making their world better that drives Meta Centre. The staff make Meta Centre the special place it is.

On behalf of the management team, the entire Meta Centre family – the men, women and children we serve, their families, your colleagues, our Board of Directors and the community – I express my appreciation and congratulations to our employees

for their work, and for the years put into their jobs.

It was a pleasure to see so many people receiving this recognition today. Longevity is very important to an agency like ours because it ensures permanence to our values, consistency, continuity, commitment, and perseverance.

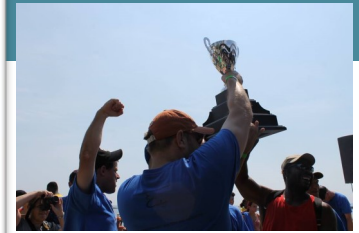
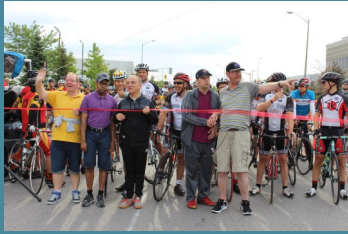
In July, Meta Centre celebrated 30 years of community service. When we opened our doors in 1986 our ambitions were simple: to make Meta Centre a place of fun, a place of personal growth, a place of learning and most importantly, a special place for special people. Thirty years later, I'm tremendously proud to say to all Meta Centre employees: Job well done, mission accomplished!

Thank you. Sincerely. Thank you.





# Flashback







## Jocelyn's Story

By Jocelyn

I've been going to the Meta day program since I was 21 years old. I wasn't feeling well and I needed more support. It was a very hard time for my parents. After I was in hospital I went to a safe bed at Vita, which I knew because I went sometimes for respite. Then five years ago I went to the Steeles Ladies group home. The ladies at

My staff at the group home and at the day program have been supporting me and have even advocated for me.

One of the things they have arranged is going to the library. They have even made it so if my books are late they won't charge me a fine.

I have my own room with my fish. They had a pet rule because one of my roommates was allergic to fur. My family worked with staff to allow me to have my tank there.

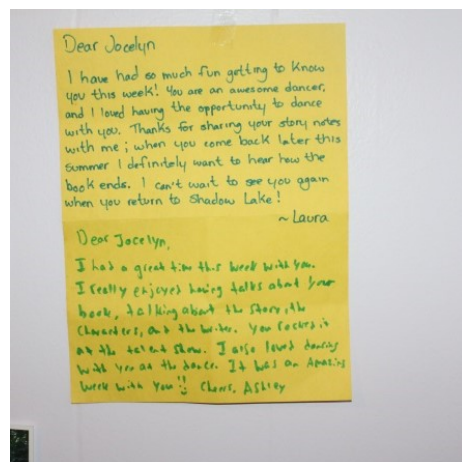


My Daddy comes to help me take care of the tank. Since I was ten years old, I have been raising fish. I've raised goldfish and tropical fish. I have been raising gold fish only and when they get big I bring them back to the Fish store and I'm able to get new ones on credit. We have a nice gazebo outside and I like listening to the birds.

The most important things I got to have at Steeles is I got to have my bird bath and bird feeder outside. And I was able to see and recognize the birds that would come into our backyard. I knew the different kind of birds, not just by sight, but by also hearing their call. I would know which one was calling. This summer we went to Fantasy



Fair, Jacussi Park, to Nana's cottage, African Lion Safari, Canada's Wonderland and The EX. Sometimes we have parties outside. It's nice that families can come and be a part of it. I go on home visits every weekend unless my family is busy. I've gone to Blue Jays games, I have sleepovers and I celebrate holidays with my family. Every Monday night, Grandma from Hamilton calls and we are able to have a visit. I usually tell her about my weekend. It is nice that my other Nana lives nearby and sometimes Nana and I get to have a visit. Sometimes on Sundays I go to Nana's church. I come home for lunch and then after lunch we play a game of scrabble together. I do quite well.



the group home attended the Richmond Hill day program, so I already knew some of the ladies there and it was easier to settle in. I was happy to go back to the day program after I was feeling better on my new meds. I like how staff keeps us safe. They give us good healthy food.





## Our Family's Story

by Heather Lowry (Jocelyn's Mother)

Jocelyn is our oldest child.

When she was born we were told there were problems due to lack of oxygen at birth. We lived with that vague diagnosis until Jocelyn was almost fourteen years old. At that time with consultations from a developmental pediatrician and genetic testing, we were given a diagnosis of Prader-Willi Syndrome. It was a relief to finally find out, but also difficult dealing with the perimeters that went with that diagnosis.

Advocating for her needs in the education system was a regular process. Getting respite funds finally at age eighteen, helped to give us some financial relief as a family, but the unpredictability of her behavior was an ongoing challenge. Finding affordable care that met her needs was an issue. Now a teenager, it was even more difficult to find people with the humour, patience and skill set to work with the complexity of her needs. We were fortunate to first receive respite through Vita Community Living. They were an

organization that had developed a group home specifically for clients with Prader-Willi Syndrome, about twelve years ago. This was great for weekend respite, but day to day care was difficult, especially with high school coming to an end. We learned about the Richmond Hill Meta Centre through York Support Services Network and arranged for an intake meeting.

I think it would be fair to say, that Jocelyn's two hour meeting was one of the most challenging in their history! My husband and I left so impressed with the organization! The intake staff; unfazed by



her behavior were willing to do what it took to make Jocelyn feel welcome. They began with taking her shopping to get their empty office aquarium (sitting in the corner during the in-take meeting) set up with fish. Jocelyn has been in the day program for ten years this past September and five years at the Steeles group home. During that time when Jocelyn's mental health issues escalated, staff worked with her to give her tools to calm herself

down. When the severe anxiety moved into manic behaviors and obsessions, they supported her with Snoezelen room time and one-on-one support.

Families can sometimes ignore or rationalize behavior they have become so familiar with.

Unfortunately for Jocelyn, she lived in a manic state for a few months and as parents we lived through the tension and caught our breath long enough to get through another day. When we took Jocelyn to our family doctor, she consulted with CAMH and made a referral to a local hospital where doctors diagnosed her with bipolar spectrum disorder. The psychiatrist recommended a change in medication and kept her under observation. After a one week stay, Jocelyn was released without any follow-up plan and little support from the hospital social worker. Even though Jocelyn was still unwell she was released into our care.

To help us manage this transition we made arrangements for temporary care at a Vita group home in North York.

Still unstable, we took Jocelyn back to our family doctor. She was dismayed by the lack of out-patient care we received and Jocelyn's state of anxiety, and re-admitted Jocelyn back to the same hospital. This time we insisted she be in the regular ward and not segregated except at night. This was a breaking point for us.





Jocelyn

Afraid to even fall asleep at any time, my husband and I faced the reality that we could no longer care for her on our own. Jocelyn needed twenty-four hour care. While she was in hospital, we told staff we would not be bringing her home.



## Our Family's Story *continued.....*

The nurses were sympathetic, understood our decision - but, what was the next step? I began to contact everyone I could think of from different agencies, York Support Services Network, Special Services at Home, Vita, etc. All were understanding, but none of them could offer immediate solutions. I was reassured that Jocelyn was at the top of the crisis waiting list for our area, but she had already been turned down from one agency because her needs were too complex! It was at this time that I learned of an empty unfunded bed through Meta. This was the life line we were waiting for. The way for Jocelyn to access this bed is a lengthy and intricate process to detail, but after a four month wait, the placement became a reality! It's almost difficult to believe that our daughter was



being placed in a home with ladies that she had come to know through the day program, would be able to live together at the location known as Steeles. She was safe, had twenty-four hour care, and we saw it as a gift from God. The home had the warmth and comfort of a real family home. Jocelyn would have a room of her own room in full view of trees and birds, facing a back garden. Best of all, the home was twenty minutes from ours and minutes away from Jocelyn's grandmother. Jocelyn is now 31 years old.

She is active in her day program, enjoys the routines, day trips, the caring staff and familiar faces, and has places she calls home. We see her once a week for a visit and a family meal and Jocelyn is content, loves her life and is happy to come and go home.

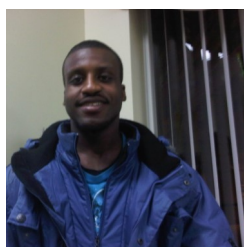






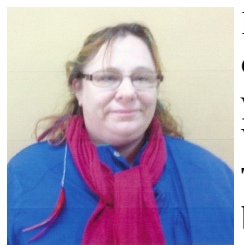
Within Meta Centre's organizational structure lies a program that addresses the immediate and future needs of individuals who are living independently.

As Meta Centre celebrates its 30<sup>th</sup> year of support services, we also have the privilege of celebrating the people in our SIL program who have fulfilled their ambitions finding meaningful employment.



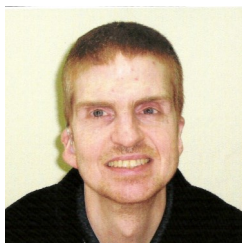
Meet Maurice, he came to Meta Centre 4 years ago. After completing a maintenance training program

at Corbrook he moved onto full time employment with the largest independently owned textile rental service in Canada, and is a valued member of the Topper team.



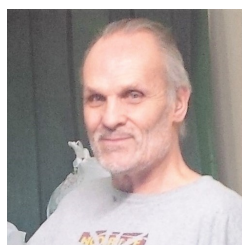
Nancy, recently celebrated 20 years as a baker at Wanda's Pie In The Sky. A bakery that is half bakery café, half

art class. The brand and people who work there have become something of a fixture in and around Toronto.



Scott, one of the longest standing employees with Investment Funds Institute of Canada, recently celebrated 20

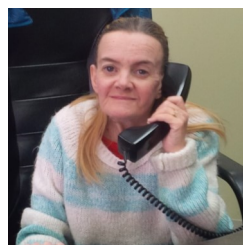
years with IFIC, a company with members that represent all facets of the investment funds industry.



Wayne is a custodial assistant who goes above and beyond his responsibilities at an independent seniors complex known as Casa Abruzzo.

An apartment complex that is equipped with a variety of features that ensures seniors an uncompromised standard of living.

Nancy, has been dedicated to her receptionist position at Meta



Centre's head office for 18 years. Whether on the phone or greeting visitors, she takes great pride in

handling her position with tact and efficiency.



Richard is also a Meta Centre employee who takes great pride in his custodial position. He ensures the Meta

Centre offices and surrounding areas are always clean, neat, and properly maintained.

Meta Centre's Supported Independent Living team headed by Edward Scea and Jill Kirkland provide person-direct support on a daily basis to people in SIL .

Accepting and respecting someone's desire to live equally encourages a pursuit to happiness. Being a part of that journey is not only gratifying, it is life changing.

When we are able to share our strengths and weaknesses and accept our differences, we also get the opportunity to learn more about ourselves. At Meta Centre, we call that a WIN—WIN!





# Celebrating 30 Years

# meta

First Day Program  
1988 DAY PROGRAM

First Group Home  
1997 BOND

Another Day Program Location  
1998 RICHMOND HILL



- 1986 Meta Centre is incorporated as a transfer payment agency by the Ministry of Community and Social Services
- 1988 Operates full-time day, part-time evening and Saturday Programs
- 1989 Provides employment support and SIL Programs
- 1992 Opens first Residential Group Home
- 1997 Opens home in York Region for A Special Needs Aging Population
- 1998 Opens Richmond Hill Day Program
- 2000 Opens Vaughan Day Program
- 2001 Expanded Vaughan location to meet growing needs
- 2004 Expanded Services, taking over CLAS (Community Living Alternative Services) group homes, staff, and clients
- 2005 Capital Campaign to accommodate Head Office and Toronto Day Program
- 2007 Opens two Scarborough Day Program locations
- 2011 Opens another Scarborough Day Program (Morrish)
- 2011 Celebrate 25 years of Community Services with 21 Residential Homes & 6 Day Programs in the GTA)
- 2015 Amalgamated Old Kingston Road Day Program with Morrish Day Program in Scarborough
- 2012 Expanded Vaughan Day Program location
- 2016 Capital Campaign for permanent Vaughan Day Program location
- 2017 Building of Vaughan Day Program Centre





# centre

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Day Program Location  
2000 VAUGHAN

Day Program & Head Office  
2005 META TORONTO

Day Program  
2007 SCARBOROUGH







## Christopher

It was a cheerful Christmas day on December 25, 1955, Christmas festivities were under way when child number 4 decided to join the party. Christopher, so named after his birthdate, was born on the way to the hospital in a neighbour's car-Dr. Harrison's car, as his brother Hamish tells it 'hence the name "Christopher Harrison White", a welcomed addition to the family! At the age of 2, Christopher's developmental disabilities became too real to ignore. He was not able to sit up without support, and he was not speaking. At the age of 4, he still could not speak, or walk. It was a difficult time as his brother Hamish remembers; difficult in coming to terms with Christopher's needs,

and difficult to get any support from the community. A time when having a family member with a disability was somehow considered shameful; and as medical and cultural advice suggested, a disabled family member's situation should be kept a secret and the solution would be to have them institutionalized. Christopher's mother did not see her son as someone to be ashamed of, but rather a son who needed a different kind of care. But in the early fifties there was little understanding or empathy for a child that was not "normal". However, the thought of sending her 4 year old son to an institution was something that she was unwilling to accept.

When his parents divorced, his mother Jacquelin, became the sole provider and caregiver. She managed with help from a number of unwed mothers who would live with the family for a year at a time while they were pregnant, and some for a time after. Helping with household chores and in taking care of Christopher in exchange for maternal support "these moms brought a richness and diversity to our home" says Hamish. However, by the time Christopher was 5, he

needed round the clock care. Christopher's mother had little choice but to seek help from the Ministry of Community and Social Services who placed him in what was the first "Institution" for developmental disabilities in the 60's. Situated in the outskirts of Orillia, it opened its doors in 1876 as the "Orillia Asylum for Idiots". A demoralizing name that later changed to the Ontario Hospital School and by the time it closed its doors in 2009 it was known as Huronia Regional Centre. Christopher lived at Huronia for 47 years and Hamish remembers the mixed emotions of having to have his brother cared for outside the family home, and the unknown feelings of whether he was being cared for properly. There was always question about the unknown of living apart, and for Hamish, never having seen his brother have any social interaction with anyone became a disheartening thought until, as Hamish tells, of a very special day. While on a bus trip from Muskoka; a young fellow got on the bus and to Hamish's delight, engaged in a conversation where he learned that he not only had





# A Brother's Story continued

Christopher and Hamish White



became a resident at Meta Centre on March 19, 2009. and was treated like family from the moment he walked through the door. From the staff's ability to understand his behaviours, to the people with whom he lives with, Christopher is finally at home. He has made obvious friendships, takes part in in-house and daytime community activities, and has discovered a freedom that comes from being in the water. "Meta Centre's support has made a difference in all of their lives" says Hamish. From routine updates to regular visits, "I know that should anything happen to me, Christopher will be ok and taken care of. I feel blessed that he is here."



worked with Chris at Huronia, but that Christopher was also one of his favourite residents. For Hamish, never thinking it could be possible, "It was truly something", to hear someone speak of his brother, and as Hamish recalls it with a beaming smile on his face, we also got to share in the marvel of that moment. Christopher





## BRUCE & THE SMELLIE FAMILY



Dedicated to Mr. Bruce Smellie

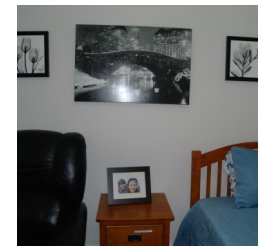
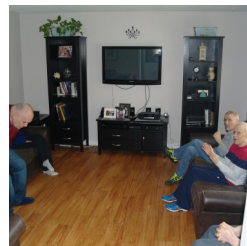
Listening to Jane and Bruce tell their story, you can't help but marvel at their ability to keep it all together! They brought to mind a quote as they told their story; "Courage is not having the energy to go on. It's going on when you do not have the energy". Their story should be among those of unsung heroes who carry the scars of their wounds in silence, face their fears with dignity with pride and conviction. Bruce was born in 1961 to Jane and Bruce Smellie. The youngest of four siblings, and as Jane tells it, when the doctors came out from the delivery room and told them that their son was born with "no eyes", her immediate response was, "well, he's going to be the smartest blind person then" and they loved him that much more.

"It was a tough road" continues Bruce, "but the doctors were incredible". At the age of 4, doctors tried implanting artificial eyes to help with the development of Bruce's facial muscles, and even though his body rejected them, the Smellie's focused on

everything wonderful about their son. Jane was right, Bruce was smart. Without his eyesight and bound to a wheelchair, Bruce was quick to develop his sensory skills, and at a very young age began expressing himself through his love of music – hymns and songs, that he would sing and remember the lyrics to. The Smellie family were a traditional family; dad worked to provide for his family, Jane a stay at home mom cared for her children. When Bruce was admitted to Gravenhurst for full time care, Jane kept her volunteer position at the library for Queen Street Mental Health Centre (known today as CAMH) that would span over 25 years. Yet, as fate would have it, tragedy followed them. Losing two of their daughters to cancer, Bruce himself fell ill, forcing Jane to become the main provider. She returned to school, and began working as an RN for the next 10 years at the place she volunteered for. As a family, they have endured heartbreak, hardship and sorrow, yet, it has

never broke their spirit or the will to be there for one another. They are generous with their thanksgiving and grateful to the people who have helped them along the way. Bruce is now 55 years of age. Visiting him at Meta Centre, Bond group home, they are at peace with the manner in which he is being cared for. His gestures, expressions, and ability to identify and react to people "is a wonderful feeling" says his father Bruce. As they bid farewell to their son with smiles, kisses and warm embraces, we also leave with a better understanding of what strength and courage looks like having witnessed it first hand with Bruce and Jane. You can't help but wish them well. They have lived through a battlefield of emotional and physical turmoil and have risen above it as victors. They have so much to be proud of and we are truly grateful to have their son as part of the Meta Family, and thankful for their openness in sharing their story with us; knowing they are not alone.





Meta Centre is growing to meet the needs of an aging population of people with developmental disabilities. Bond, is presently one of three homes addressing the needs of senior citizens.

Kevin (Bond's Day Program Supervisor) and Laura (Bond's Day Program Instructor) along with their team of support workers, address the daily challenges of their verbal and non-verbal residents with daily meetings to discuss and familiarize themselves with behaviours; support tactics, and to identify individual interests, and health matters. It's inspiring to see how the team's in-house addition of live music sessions and community activities have brought about notable benefits from both a social and personal perspective.

*A brief account on how Meta Centre Seniors at BOND are "bonding"!*

Whether taking part in activities within the home or out in the community, it's interesting to observe how the sociological concept of interaction, shared expectations, and behaviours change when a community takes on a different physical geographic location and perspective. With community activity an important

element in all programs at Meta, Bond residents are also supported in preparing and taking part in the activity outside of the home. Visiting a community swimming pool on a weekly basis becomes a recreational opportunity for Meta Centre's residents, as well as an opportunity for others in the community to become acquainted with people who are different in their ability to participate. What has been a welcomed surprise, as Laura tells it, is "how regular patrons and staff have taken the time to learn names, and establish relationships" beyond a greeting. For example, Jordana, a lifeguard at the Elgin West Community Centre knows that Scotty likes to wear different hats so she now makes a point of having different hats for him to put on when he visits. Other pool staff will bring out favorite pool items for our clients to use in the pool. When a patron, Gary, is at the community centre, he will usually be found throwing a ball back and forth with Christopher. Keith's playful disposition generates boisterous laughter throughout when he decides to show off his physique by flexing his muscles. The entire experience, as Laura describes it is "quite inspiring, and the ease of everyone's interactions heart-warming."

When asked how the program addresses the group's individual needs on a daily basis? Laura does not hesitate to describe how non-verbal gestures become louder than words, and how planned activities are modified to accommodate interests and behaviours for the best possible experience. The vibration at Bond can be described as one which communicates its unique differences to transcend boundaries and promote life lessons for all people through its diversity.







Zubaida is 70 years young and wears a constant smile. There is a shyness about her that quickly dissipates to take the limelight in a social setting. She quietly walks through the kitchen door at Bond and pulls up a chair to sit as close as possible to her niece Soraya. As we settle into the interview, one can't help but feel the closeness of their bond. Soraya explains that Zubaida was born with congenital developmental delay. The youngest of a family of seven, with four brothers, and one other sister, she lived in South Africa until the age of 53. At the age of 30 Zubaida had lost both parents, her sister Fatima and Soraya's father had immigrated to Canada, so she was left to the remaining three brothers and shuffled between homes situated in different towns. She suffered intolerable emotional abuse due to the instability; and without a permanent address could not enroll in any program for any length of time. Her brothers' attempt to accept and manage an unwanted situation denied Zubaida a normal life. Keeping her isolated and confined

in a small room with nothing more than a bed, Zubaida would only say a few words when spoken to. Soraya remembered never being left alone with Zubaida during family visits that consisted of minimal conversation. Meanwhile in Canada, Zubaida's sister held a teaching position. From the 1970's until her passing in 1999, Fatima travelled back and forth to South Africa communicating with officials with reprise to try to get Zubaida to Canada. On February 16th 1999, four days after Zubaida arrived on an emergency travel visa, Fatima passed away from a terminal illness. Soraya explained how Fatima had pleaded for her and her husband to take care of Zubaida, and "with my work experience in assisting people with disabilities access services, and without children of my own, my husband and I were hopeful of finding appropriate long term care for her. We took her home, and were fortunate to have an army of support from family and friends to be able to provide her with a loving home. In May of 1999, she was enrolled in Meta Centre's day program. Within the first 6 months she blossomed! Taking part in recreational excursions, sports activities, and the arts; she learned to swim, sing with a choir, and even take drama classes! She became more social, and spoke with anyone who cared to listen. In July of 2015 Zubaida became a resident in one of Meta Centre's

homes. "As much of an adjustment as it appeared to be for all of us, we had peace of mind knowing that she was being taken care of." It's a wonderful feeling to receive regular reports on her care, knowing she is encouraged to discover her abilities and she is safe. We are also fortunate to have a Passport funded worker who takes her out in the community every weekend, and we have the opportunity of bringing her home once a month or longer if we are taking her on a trip. In as much as Zubaida's quality of life has improved, so has ours. We cannot imagine life the way it was before she completed our family. She has brought us so much joy; forced us to slow down, and appreciate the moments we are sharing. Indebted to Meta Centre for the care and peace of mind they brought to our family, we jumped at the chance to



sponsor a room during their Capital Campaign for Meta Centre Toronto. "We truly appreciate the quality of life their dedication to special needs has brought to all of us."





Whether it's a weekday evening, weekend, themed Sunday or holiday break, Meta Centre's respite programs in three locations throughout the GTA (Toronto, Scarborough and Richmond Hill) are designed to introduce experiences and opportunity.

Lana Cianfrini is Meta Centre's respite "jewel". She became enthralled with the people Meta Centre supports while attending one of the annual fundraising events. Still in school, she wanted to become involved in some capacity and was given an opportunity to volunteer for Respite Saturdays at the Vaughan location. The rest is history. As Respite Supervisor for the past 10 years, Lana's ability to identify the needs of the people and families Meta supports is her strongest asset. From an in-take assessment to a family's innate concern, Lana and her team consider all probabilities that could affect and or prevent someone from having a positive experience in order to immerse them and provide the support they need. "Nothing is

impossible", and should situations present themselves trained staff are prepared to buffer them. In her vision to offer Respite services that support families and their needs, Lana has expanded its respite services to include week nights, Saturdays, extended hours and holiday camps. With a natural ability to understand the importance of respite services for the people it supports, Lana and her team regularly review the programs to ensure they are engaging. From regular team meetings to review individual profile to researched planned social and in-house opportunities, the team works backwards to place individual needs first, then looks to discover opportunities for real-life experiences that encompass recreation, life-skills, health, hygiene, exercise, music and entertainment.

With a dedicated, handpicked team at the helm of her focus, Lana has become the driving force behind Meta Centre's respite program. Families quickly become aware that peace of mind and time

for themselves is not the only priority Meta respite strives to provide. Witnessing how the experiences encourage their loved one's self-esteem, develop life skills and educate to promote a healthy lifestyle, it becomes quite evident that Meta Centre is one of the best, if not the best respite program across the GTA.

Families frequently voice their appreciation for the manner in which the respite team is engaging their loved ones at every opportunity. Whether it's a motion picture or discovering the calming effects of Ripley's Aquarium, Lana's ultimate goal for respite as it moves forward is to ensure each person in the group experiences something. Something that has inspired them enough to know that they are no different than anyone else!

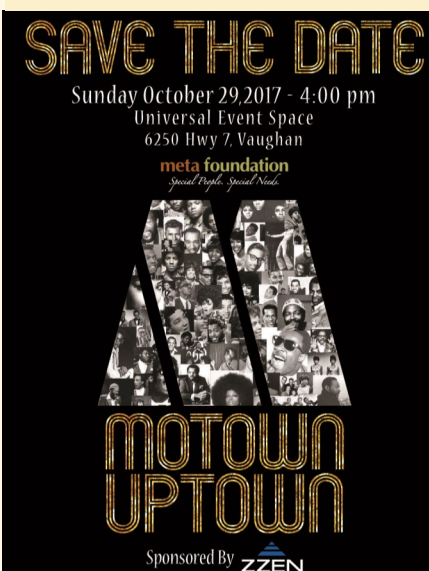
As respite reaches out to partner within its community, its focus remains the same. To continue to empower an individual's will to succeed and live a purposeful, fulfilling life.



# Upcoming Events



[www.metacentre.ca](http://www.metacentre.ca)



Visit: [metacentre.ca/EVENTS](http://metacentre.ca/EVENTS), or contact: [info@metacentre.ca](mailto:info@metacentre.ca) for more information.

**Ladies Martini Night**  
Thursday, April 27, 2017  
Tickets: \$70 online  
At the Door: \$75

**Family Walk, Relay & Gran Fondo**  
Sunday, June 25, 2017.  
Online registration forthcoming.

**Motown Uptown**  
Sunday, October 29, 2017.  
Tickets/Sponsorship Opportunities  
Contact: [info@metacentre.ca](mailto:info@metacentre.ca)



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