

SPECIAL NEEDS • MOVING ON



member to member connection

Breaking through barriers for workers who have children with special needs

N° 15 Winter 2007/2008



I'm a truck driver (C.S.P.) for Canada Post since 1999; the same year my daughter Rita-Alexsandra Vittoria was born. A great thanks to the Special Needs Project which helped me pay expenses related to Rita-Alexsandra's needs who is autistic. Thanks from both of us.

Driver
Montréal, QC

Myla-Riem took part in the Quebec Games, which took place in L'Assomption. She won a silver medal, and so we're very proud of her. We've registered her for selection to participate in the Canada Games, which will take place in Quebec for the first time. We hope she will be selected.

PO-5
Ville-de-la-baie, QC

**CUPW releases
new video:**

Breaking Through Barriers



See our newly produced DVD. Members share their stories about their lives and how having a child with special needs has affected their work, children and families:

- A rural and suburban mail carrier struggles to parent an autistic child and make ends meet by working several part-time jobs.
- A single mother works the midnight shift as a postal clerk and juggles work and home supporting a teenage son who has a visual impairment.
- A letter carrier and his family tackle the challenges of a daughter with a disability who's moving into adulthood and independence.

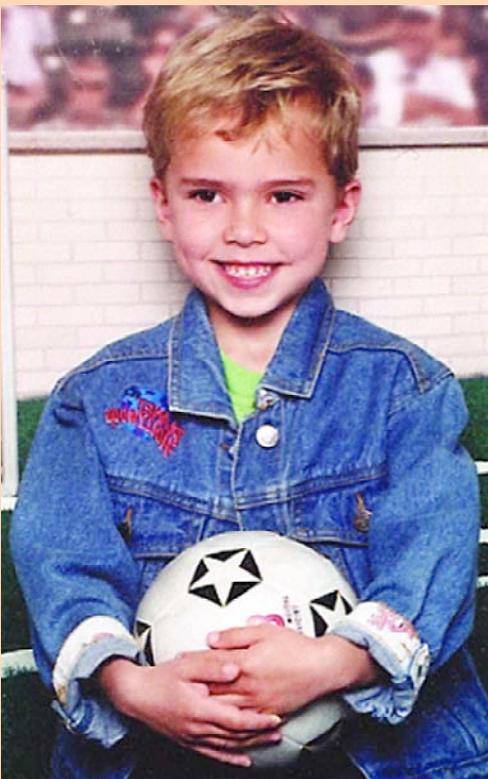
You can get a copy of the new DVD from your local union or the Special Needs Project office.



"The funds that we receive from this program have helped us pay for a variety of needs for our children."

Just wanted to say what a fantastic difference projects like the Moving On Project has made to my household. With this I was able to enroll my son into some self-improvement classes. The results are astronomical. This is not by any means a cure but rather he has gained some self reliance, freeing me from a lot of anxiety and offering me some well deserved rest.

Letter Carrier
Richmond Hill, ON



Our grandson Skyler is 6 years old. The extra funding gives us the opportunity to access a support worker for his after school daycare needs where he is learning to develop social skills. We would like to express a sincere thank you for the support given to us by the Special Needs Project.

Letter Carrier
Campbell River, BC

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My name is Norm Sirois. I'm a full time letter carrier in Saskatoon. I first heard about the Special Needs Project through two fellow letter carriers that I work with. Am I ever thankful to them for mentioning this program to me. I have two sons, Nicholas (11) and Christian (4). Nicholas has been diagnosed with auditory processing disorder and he has also needed speech therapy since he was two. He goes to Oxford Learning Center twice a week to help him with his reading and vocabulary difficulties. Christian has had more of an uphill climb than his big brother. He was deprived of oxygen at some point during the pregnancy. We were told that he would have some sort of

disability to deal with as he got older. Christian is currently in pre-school and he sees a private speech therapist weekly. He has come a long way and we hope he will improve the older he gets. The Special Needs Project has been a blessing for us. The funds that we receive from this program have helped us pay for a variety of needs for our children. I wish to thank everyone involved with this program and I will be sure to refer this resource to others in need.

Letter Carrier
Saskatoon, SK

My daughter is now 10. Her learning is failing her. She now wears hearing aids, she still has no speech and is very much a baby. But despite all of this she truly is a beautiful, spiritual angel. Expenses are becoming more as she gets older and bigger. I really would like to thank the Special Needs Project for their impact although it is only a small dent, it is very much noticed and appreciated.

Letter Carrier
Orangeville, ON



"This was a great opportunity for both Michaël and Vincent to spend, for the first time, the whole summer together."

Looking for a tricycle

I have a beautiful autistic son, 11 years old, who does not have too much fun. So I am looking for a tricycle for his age. Next summer I want to give him a nice surprise by buying him a tricycle. As you all know, tricycles are expensive and I can not afford the cost; so I would like to ask if somebody has one that they no longer use that they would be willing to sell. Thanks to all the parents of the Special Needs Project and thanks to the Canadian Union of Postal workers for the project.

PO-4
Toronto, ON

Tip

Children or adults fed on an S-Tube could find some relief from gas in their stomachs by dropping a few peppermint knobs into the feeding bottle as it will dissolve in the liquid and will add a little flavour too.

Postal Clerk, PO-4
Kentville, NS

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the wonderful summer that both our boys had this year at the Champ Fleury Summer Camp organized by CUPW. This was a great opportunity for both Michaël (10) and Vincent (7) to spend, for the first time, the whole summer together. This truly meant a lot to both my husband and I. Vincent is autistic and has special needs; which has made it, till now, impossible to have both boys spend time together during the summer days. Not only has it given them a chance to bond, but it also gave Michaël a chance to be comfortable with his new friends and not be torn between his feeling of wanting to be with his friends and his feelings of wanting to watch over his brother. Having been introduced and integrated with the other children in his group, as well as having explained to them his special situation, made a world of difference in the way he was approached by the children. In fact, this was his first integration in a regular group. I truly feel that this made a big difference in Vincent's summer; we in fact saw a great improvement in his desire to socialize with other children of his age. This I can tell you is a huge step in his involvement in life. Not only has this opportunity given him a chance to be with others; but he was also able to appreciate the need for socializing. This was a great summer for not only our boys; but it has also touched us as parents.

PO-4
Montréal, QC

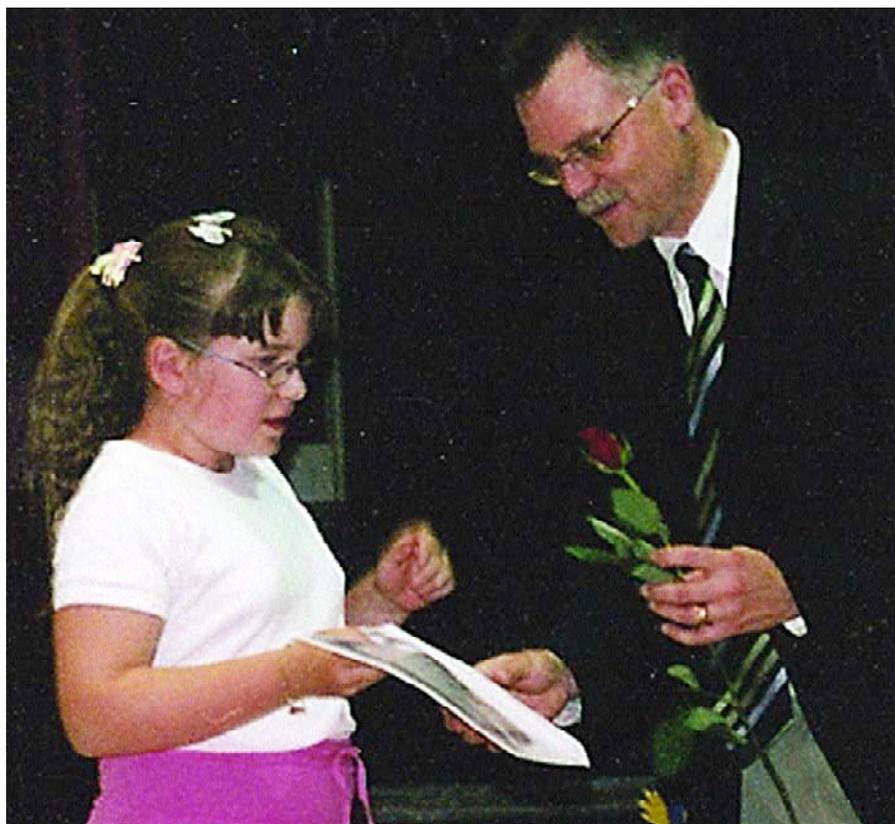




Ashley was awarded by the Council for Exceptional Children with the "Yes I Can" award for social learning.

My daughter Ashley (9 yrs old) has autism. She was awarded on June 8th/06 by the Council for Exceptional Children with the "Yes I Can" award for social learning. Ashley's sister, mother, grandmother, great grandmother, Special Education teacher and two of her school's Education Assistants were proud to have been there that evening. We would also just like to say many "thanks" for all the help and support we continue to get. I like the fact that we were given the option early on to do July/August paperwork ahead of time. Have a great summer —
The Hagerman Girls.

Mail Service Courier
Ottawa, ON



I have a problem with the high school system. My son has now gone to three high schools and at each school I've had a problem with them not knowing enough about diabetics. I was sick suffering from a migraine and they called because Dennis was passing out and they wanted to know what they should do. I had to go to the school in a cab, while sick, to save him. I gave him juice; but what if I was too late? On another occasion he felt ill and needed sugar. He had no dextrose so he told the teacher and she said go to the cafeteria; so that is what he did. But 15 minutes later the teacher saw him in the cafeteria trying to level his sugars and told

him to go to the office. He did and they disciplined him. So the next day I showed up at his school in his defense. *Do other parents experience this?*

Postal Clerk
Toronto, ON

Although we have a son with special needs, moderate mental handicap and hearing impaired, we live a great life through close family ties and good community programs. We've found Community

Living, which have great programs for special children. We can't thank them enough. We also receive funding through the Special Needs Project of CUPW, which helps us offset other programs for our son, such as tutoring, swimming lessons and summer camp. We greatly appreciate this program, every little bit helps.

Postal Clerk, PO-4
Maple Ridge, BC



"I felt it would be a good way to share my knowledge with members while doing something I enjoy."

Gary Comeau:

New Brunswick Moving On Project Advisor

The best part of being an Advisor for Gary Comeau is the contact he has with the families; hearing about how their adult son or daughter is progressing and being able to offer a new piece of advice or support that a family did not know about. "That's a real bonus!" he says. "I've learned a lot from the families, and I can share what I've learned with others in the project."

Gary participates in a number of different committees aimed at improving government programs and services for persons with disabilities. So his fairly new role as a Moving On Advisor is a great fit. Gary has been Assistant Executive Director for the New Brunswick Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons since 1999 while his association with the Council dates back to 1997.

His start with the project began with an initial call from Gail Holdner, the coordinator, looking for someone to act as an advisor for members in New Brunswick. After receiving the information package from Gail, it didn't take long for Gary to realize that he was the "someone" they were looking for. "Once I read about the project and job description, I felt it would be a good way to share my knowledge with members while doing something I enjoy."

Since April 2006, Gary has been a bilingual Advisor for the Moving On Project. Currently he is an Advisor to six

New Brunswick families providing support in both French and English.

Outside of Gary's busy work schedule, his second passion is travel. Eight years ago, upon meeting the love of his life Diane, he caught the travel bug from her. After their initial trip to Europe they try to travel together once a year. They don't have any children yet, but "maybe soon" he says.

Gary realizes that he plays a small but important role in the project. "There are many others contributing and I'd like to acknowledge their hard work". He wanted to pass along his thanks to the staff working behind the scenes for making the Special Needs and Moving On projects so successful. "To all the Advisors out there, keep up the good work!"





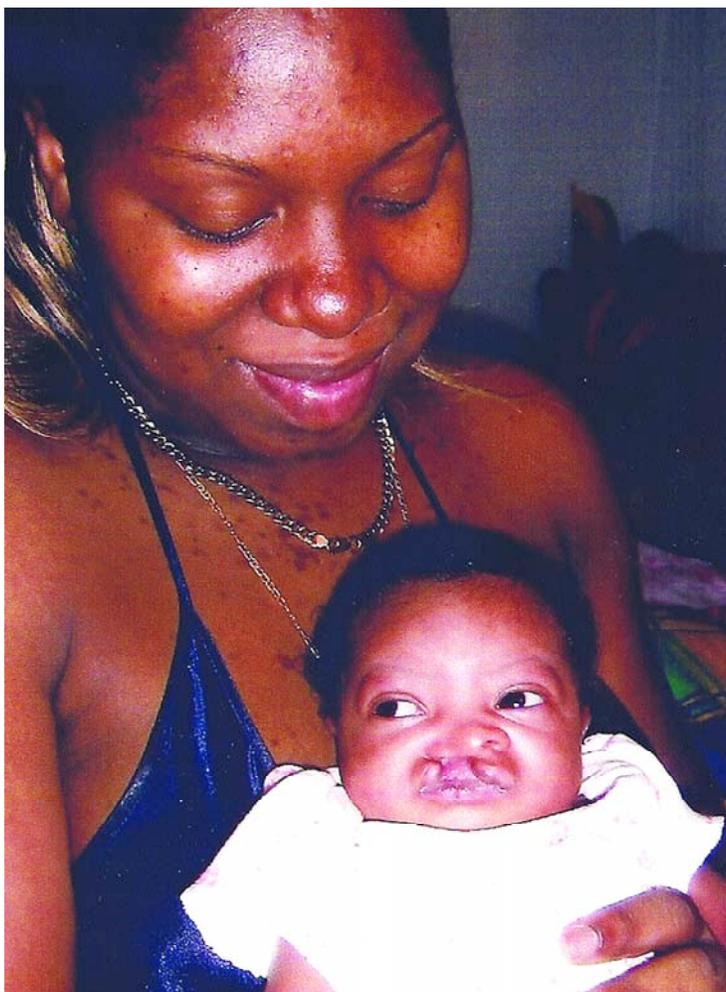
"We are grateful for all the help and support that everyone gave my family and me."

On August 18, 2005 we went in for my ultra sound feeling excited and anxious to see our baby. Normally, we would spend one hour to make sure all the pictures are taken of the baby; unfortunately we end up spending three. I asked the doctor "what's wrong we normally spend 1 hour". She told us that something was wrong with the machine but at that time the machine seems perfectly fine to me. I started to worry that there was a problem with my baby but the doctor said not to worry that everything was fine. I knew she was lying from the look on her face. A couple of days later I received a phone call from my doctor. She told me that there was a problem with the ultra sound. She stated that by the look of the pictures, it seemed as if the baby has a cleft lip. I started to ask a lot of questions and she tried explaining the situation to me but I could not stop crying. I did not know what to think or what to do because I was so confused. I called Craig and told him the bad news — that our baby had a cleft lip.

We started to comfort each other and tried to understand what was happening. Then the next day I called my doctor and told her that I would like a second opinion. She referred me to see a radiologist for a 3D ultra sound. I went in to see the radiologist a week later and he confirmed that the baby has not only a cleft lip but a cleft palate. I started crying in the room and started to wonder why this had to happen to our first baby. I felt as if I was a victim of a crime. My whole world began to cave in.

I became very depressed, frustrated, left out, angry and traumatized because I felt helpless. I cried for months until I got referred by a genetics doctor to a plastic surgeon at Sick Kids who reassured us that everything was going to be fine. He showed us before and after pictures of kids that he had done surgery on. We were very pleased with the great job he had done on those kids. We started to regain confidence that everything was going to be fine and our child is going to be in good hands.

When our daughter was born the team at Sick Kids became a part of our family. They were there every



step of the way. Leanna had all the support, which made it very easy for us to cope, even though at times I would still cry. Leanna was born 4 pounds 5 ounces but she was very strong and we believed that everything was going to be fine. After three months of preparation Leanna had surgery on June 14, 2006. Dr. David Fisher and staff did a brilliant job with our daughter. Words cannot explain how happy her father and I were to see this brand new little girl. We are grateful for all the help and support that everyone gave my family and me. I would also like to thank the Canadian Union of Postal Workers Special Needs Project for their much appreciated support.

Letter Carrier
Toronto, ON



"I would like Canada Post to create job opportunities."

Hi there my name is Gail; I'm a letter carrier in Scarborough. I have 2 children with ADD and ADHD. One is fourteen and the other is eleven and both have learning disabilities. When the public school failed to recognize the problems, I sent my daughter to a private school in Ajax, Ontario called "Wasdell Centre for Innovative Learning" — it has made a huge difference in her life. She is now back in public school and adjusting nicely. Both children are on medication that works for them. Having special children has made a big difference in my life. It's amazing how much I've learned about them as individuals, about their disorders and their learning disabilities and differences. I sent my daughter to "Wasdell Centre" for their "Brain Based" program to experience the weak areas of the brain.

It was well worth the time and money and I highly recommend this school as every child has an IEP an "Individual Education Program." The school has a long distance learning program for people who live out of the area or province. They also have a part time or full time schedule. I wish all schools were like this one. They can be reached at 905.426.3241 or emailed at www.wasdellcentre.org.

Thank you Special Needs Project for always being there for us and thank you to all of you who have shared your stories over the years. Sharing helps us help each other.

Letter Carrier
Scarborough, ON

I would like to see Canada Post create some job opportunities for these kids and young adults who are the beneficiaries of the Moving On Project. With a bit of creativity, I feel that they could contribute in some functional manner. As well as doing meaningful work it would enhance the corporation's image as well as provide income and self worth for the families and their kids, especially in smaller and or remote communities right across the country where employment opportunities suitable for our kids would probably be limited.

PO-5
Mississauga, ON

Claire has generally benefited from an intense literacy program offered by our school district. Four afternoons a week, 4-6 children and two teachers meet from October until June. Thanks to this program (and a very motivated learner!), Claire's reading has gone from a grade 2/3 level (May '06) to grade 6-8 (Apr.'07)! In fact



she has graduated 2 months early! While the program is funded by the school district, transportation costs are not. Because of our work schedules our only option has been taxis to and from the school where the program is based. Thanks to the Special Needs Project for helping us to afford this invaluable experience for Claire!

PO-4
Kelowna, BC



Living in a small community is the life for Karle.

I would like to tell you a little story about my son Karle. One of his workers and I wrote this, so you can understand Karle a bit.

Karle is a 24-year-old developmentally handicapped individual that loves life with all the ups, downs and curves it has to offer. The world around us may change at such a fast pace that all of us scramble just to try and stay above water, but not Karle. He's consistent and wavers not. As Karle sees it, the world revolves around him and that's just the way it should be.

Karle's life at times, especially his early years, were full of the terrible two's only multi-plex that x10 and it lasted for well over his 2nd year. His parents strived to maintain a consistent environment through the childhood years and with the help of agencies and personal friends they were able to give Karle the experiences he needed to grow up to be the sensitive, compassionate individual that he is today.

It wasn't easy as a parent and there were times when it was difficult to just try and carry on and get to the next day. With Karle there was never a dull moment. Whether it was keeping Karle away from chainsaws or lawn mower, you were always on the look out. Karle loved and to this day still loves farm equipment. Perhaps it was the hours he spent with his dad or Poppy watching them fix small engines and asking thousands of

questions about this or that. Karle always felt he was one of the guys and loved the camaraderie. Karle also loves the time spent with mom. She has worked for Canada Post since 1992 and Karle was given the opportunity to help her on her mail runs. Karle loved to put the mail into the boxes and raise the flag. He considered his job very important as he was responsible for people getting letters from their

Karle is a participant in many community activities and is always willing to go the extra mile to learn new skills and meet new people. He is a sociable person and he brings out the best in you. If you like to talk and listen, he's your man! Living in a small community is the life for Karle.

Karle is finished high school now and is involved in various commu-

nity-based programs through a local agency. Every time he spots a rural letter carrier he asks to slow down so he can take a look to see if it is his mom or another friend that works for the Post Office. He will often look at his worker and say, "There's another Letter Carrier doing a fine job," He also states, "I might do that job when I grow up, that will make mom proud, Right?" We just don't have the heart to tell him he is already grown up. The dream of working delivering mail is enough for Karle right now. But you had better keep your eyes open. It would not surprise us to one day see Karle drive up to the Post Office, load his car with

the daily mail and head out. Neither sleet, nor snow would stop Karle, as he has told us all that he would put a blade on the front of the truck and plow his way to his deliveries. The man's got a plan!

RSMC
Prescott, ON



friends and lets not forget the cheques! Karle was always concerned that people get their money to buy groceries as soon as possible. I'm sure if there were some way for Karle to get his license, he would work delivering mail, as there isn't a job as important as handling the mail, according to Karle.



"This past summer we used the funds to enroll him in a wonderful day camp at the Down Syndrome Research Foundation."



areas; but the area in which he shows the most delay is speech development. Your program has helped us pay for extra speech therapy sessions throughout the year.

This past summer we used the funds to enroll him in a wonderful day camp at the Down Syndrome Research Foundation. Every morning for two weeks, the children had an individual speech therapy session and worked on literacy, art, and music. Jonathan thoroughly enjoyed the program and being with children like himself (at his school he is the only child with Down Syndrome). But most of all, he felt so proud of himself and we saw improvements in both his independence and speech development. Thanks a million!

We would like to thank the union for your financial assistance in trying to meet our middle son's special needs. Our son, Jonathan, is currently 6 years old and in grade 1. He has an older brother, André and a baby brother, Anthony. Jonathan was born with Down Syndrome,

but fortunately he has been basically healthy except for a battle with leukemia that began when he was 19 months old. He responded well to chemotherapy treatments and in May of 2007 he achieved 5 years of being cancer free! Jonathan has shown delays in many

Letter Carrier
Port Coquitlam, BC

Offer

I have a posture drainage board for philo that is valued at \$250. If anyone needs this board, mainly used for cystic fibrosis physiotherapy, you may have it for free. Three different positions, barely used, like new. Please contact me.

Mail Dispatcher, PO-5
Mississauga, ON

Our son John was fortunate enough to join the Kedron Scouting Group this year. It gave John a chance to interact with boys and girls his age in a non-competitive environment. John spent his first weekend camping at Camp Samac, experienced target practice using a bow and arrow and even learned how to cook for himself. A special thank you goes to the Special Needs Project.

Postal Clerk PO-4
Oshawa, ON

Looking for

I am looking for someone else in the Edmonton area who may have a child with ADHD who would be willing to share ideas on how to handle situations.

Letter Carrier
Edmonton, AB



"My parents say I'm very brave and tell me that I am their greatest treasure."

Hello, my name is Alexander and I'm five years old. When I was born, I was diagnosed with hypopituitarism. This is a malformation of the pituitary gland that made me constantly hypoglycaemic. One in every 10,000 children has this condition. My parents were very worried, since some of my hormones weren't working properly. So I have to take several types of medication, including cortisone, and I have to continually increase the dose. I also need growth hormone injections every day. The hardest thing is that I become hypoglycaemic whenever I get sick.

The Special Needs Project is a great support to my family and myself. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts. My parents say I'm very brave and tell me that I am their greatest treasure.

Letter Carrier
Victoria, BC



Just a word to tell you what a big, brave boy we have!!! In July 2004, when our son Mathieu was five years old, we became worried about his lack of energy. We went to our family doctor, who referred us to the Edmunston Regional Hospital, where he underwent a series of blood tests. After a week in Edmunston, Mathieu had to be admitted to a hospital in Ste-Foy, Quebec. Two weeks later, after undergoing another series of tests and a spinal tap, he was diagnosed with juvenile systemic arthritis, a rather serious disease. These tests then had to be repeated to confirm the development of the disease.

Juvenile systemic arthritis is a rarer, but often more serious form of arthritis (a joint disease) that affects roughly 20% of children with juvenile arthritis. Mathieu suffered bouts of fever several times a day. Victims of the disease often show an inflammation of their lymphatic glands and an increase in the volume of their liver and spleen. From 2004 to 2006, Mathieu had only two relapses. Each time, he had to start taking his entire medication all over again: seven types of drugs and two kinds of vitamins per day, at a cost of \$600 to \$700 a month. In 2006, Mathieu was admitted to Grant-Sault Hospital, where they

determined that he had developed a kidney infection as a result of his illness. Mathieu then had to take antibiotics for an indefinite period. He is generally doing much better now, and is taking less medication. We are continuing to visit a specialist and our family physician. Mathieu turned nine on September 8th. He is our champion!!!!

RSMC
Grand-Sault, New-Brunswick



"Being a parent is a rewarding job — a labour of love."

My son has ADD and an anxiety disorder. Both bring his esteem and confidence down. What a relief to know I can access the Special Needs Project. Being a parent is a rewarding job, but one that requires 24 hr. duty and is a labour of love. But when you have a child with special needs it can also be stressful. There is the financial stress, but more important is the worry over whether or not your child is getting the best care available that will enable them to reach their full potential. I may have only just found out about the project, but it is something I am so lucky to be a part of. For years it has been a struggle with my son becoming more frustrated and angry. I was worried that as a teenager (he's 14) he would find the academic pressures to be too much. I am now able to afford tutoring and counselling to give him the skills and confidence to continue on through these tougher school years and to one day graduate with a sense of pride and achievement.

Letter Carrier
Victoria, BC

Thanks to the Special Needs Project we have been able to utilize many creative outlets for Jordan — day camp, music, painting, computer work, etc. We are interested in hearing from parents of non-verbal children, who have, through music, or art therapy, had success in getting speech started. We keep trying things, but Jordan is now 14, and still no speech but some interesting sounds.

Letter Carrier
Bobcaygeon, ON

Wishing You a Happy New Year

from your friends at CUPW / UPCE-PSAC Special Needs and Moving On Projects.

**Special Needs
and Moving On
Advisors:**

Beth B.
Lori A.
Lisa B.
Maureen B.
Nancy B.
Cora B.
Susan B.
Gary C.
Lesley Ann C.
Melynda C.
Norma C.
Suzanne C.
Catherine D.
Christine D.
Debbie D.
Valerie D.
Agnieszka G.
Anne G.
Brenda G.
Chris G.

Don G.
Sylvie G.
Kathleen J.
Marie-Josée L.
Bernadette M.
Deb M.
Donna M.
Ellen M.
Enna M.
Janet M.
Sue M.
Shirley M.
Pam M.
Roberta M.
Dianne M.
Pat M.
Becky N.
Heather N.
Sheila O.
Catherine O.
Debra Jo P.
Normand R.

Arlie R.
Betsy S.
Dianna S.
Nancy S.
Sheila S.
Sharel S.
Julie S.
Lawana S.
Doris T.
Michelle T.

CUPW:

Denis Lemelin
Jamie Kass
Jocelyne Tougas
Amanda Mayer

UPCE-PSAC:

Richard L.
DesLauriers

Family Place:

JoAnna LaTulippe-
Rochon
JoAnne Connors
Dorothy Keigan
Cary MacDonald
Gail Holdner





Seasons Greetings Sisters & Brothers!

This issue is dedicated to all of you - filled with your stories, ideas and requests that we received in 2007. Due to the high number of letters received, we were not able to get everyone's letter in this issue; but are working towards posting them onto our website. It is always great to hear from you and it makes the union proud that you send in letters and pictures of your children! Experiences of one family benefit so many others when they are shared.



2007 has been a busy year. We launched the new website and produced a special 10th anniversary issue of Member to Member Connection. CUPW has also produced a new DVD, *Breaking through Barriers*, that tells the story of three postal workers who have children with special needs. CUPW hopes that this video will assist the union in reaching out to our members, disability and community organizations about the challenges that parents face when working and having a child with special needs.

We also want to take this opportunity to thank the Board of Directors and staff at Cape Breton Family Place for your commitment and dedication to this project. To JoAnne, Dorothy and Cary in the Baddeck office, a huge thanks for your daily work that truly makes sure we are supporting members and their families in unique and wonderful ways. And of course to all the Advisors who make our project even more valuable to our members. Thank you.

We hope you and your family have much joy and peace as you enter into 2008.

In solidarity,

Denis Lemelin
2nd National Vice-President
Canadian Union of Postal Workers

Check out our web site at www.specialneedsproject.ca

In May 2006, I had the opportunity to attend the *Child Care Now* educational at the CAW centre in Port Elgin, Ontario. It was an extraordinary experience and I recommend it to all my sisters and brothers. There was one part about special needs children that I learned a lot from, and I met with parents with children who are in the same situation as my son Tristan "TED". Because of this experience, I'll be able to talk about the Special Needs Program to those who need it.

Letter Carrier
Terrebonne, QC

Member-to-Member Connection is the newsletter of the Special Needs and Moving On projects. It is produced by the Canadian Union of Postal Workers and the Union of Postal Communications Employees — Public Service Alliance of Canada.

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Français



**Special Needs
& Moving On**
Projects of CUPW/UPCE-PSAC

Breaking through barriers for workers
who have children with special needs

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