

A Life More Fully Realized ... *... by Crystal Tancredi, Staff Liaison, A-OK & Adult Programme*

On August 11, we mourned the loss of Eunice Kennedy Shriver, a great champion of those with intellectual disabilities. She was 88 years old.

Mrs. Shriver was born into that most storied of American political dynasties, the Kennedys. Her siblings included two U.S. Senators and a President, and the current generation of Kennedys has continued the tradition of contribution to public life.

And yet, in some ways, her contribution to the greater good may be more significant and more enduring; for Mrs. Shriver started a global revolution in the lives of those with intellectual disabilities, and, by extension, all those with special needs, including those with autism.

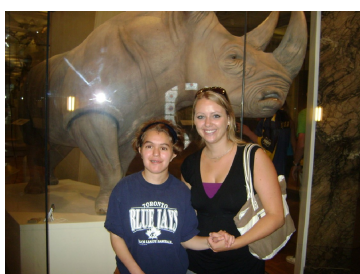
Upon reading of her death, I reflected upon how her achievements have made the road travelled by our own children smoother. The creation of the Special Olympics gradually cascaded into a sea change in public perceptions, helping to radically amend the realities of life for other people with special needs; untapped potential could become, instead, a life more fully realized.

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AT WORK & PLAY WITH YOUTH CAMP

... by Laura Pitoscia, Foundations Support Associate, Kerry's Place Autism Services



While it's relatively easy to picture the activities scheduled at a children's camp like A-OK, it might be a little more difficult to imagine the specifics of the day-to-day of our Youth Camp. I have had the privilege of being a substitute counsellor for the Camp. My time was proven memorable a few weeks ago when, on the Behemoth at Wonderland for the first time, I found that, for a change, our campers were the ones supporting *me*.

Our Youth Camp's daily activities are divided into two types: A morning work placement, and afternoon social outings. In the morning work placement, our campers obtain work experience in a variety of settings in the community. Before Camp begins, the Director arranges with local businesses for a number of placements that provide the campers with diverse work experience. This allows our young campers to begin preparing for a part-time job, and makes getting their foot in the door a little easier.

Work placements are arranged with such businesses as No Frills, Bulk Barn, Rogers Video, Resthaven Nursing Home and Books on the Hill.

Campers spend their afternoons on fun and exciting outings such as Dave and Busters, Reptilia, Canada's Wonderland, the Art Gallery of Ontario and the Royal Ontario Museum. Resume writing workshops, art classes and drama workshops are also part of the afternoons.

Through my (albeit limited) direct experience with the campers, I have seen an ongoing positive attitude and excitement for camp. Campers not only boost their resumes and gain valuable work experience, but they are able to make good friends, too. I am always very proud to speak about our Camp and the great things our campers are doing. ♥

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Indeed, as affirmed by the Associated Press, she was "credited with transforming America's view of the mentally disabled from institutionalized patients to friends, neighbors and athletes."

Today, our own Camps and staff are the unassuming but undeniable heirs to Mrs. Shriver's brilliant vision, ideals and actions – but, as applied instead, to autism.

"We have always been honored to share our mother with people of good will the world over who believe, as she did, that there is no limit to the human spirit," her family stated.

The Autism Ontario - York Region Camp families place ourselves firmly among believers in the boundlessness of the human spirit; but the true essence of our Camps is that we are also blessed to count our staff among believers. They are our heart and soul. And so, as another summer passes into memory, we offer our humblest thanks for their commitment, passion and fiery determination to make the vision of opportunity and inclusion a reality. ♥