



Blake Boultee
Youth Outreach Service
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November 2007

To my caring friends:

It's twelve years ago. I'm sitting at my desk in our old storefront drop-in space. In walks Melissa holding the hand of a little girl. She has a backpack slung over her shoulder and a nervous face that says, "I have something to ask you but I'm painfully shy and scared." "Hi," I say to the young girl, "what can I do for you? I'm Rod."

She stands there in front of me looking at the floor for a few moments and then very quietly says, "I heard from someone that you help people get jobs, and well, I need one."

"What's your name and who's the little one?" I ask her.

"I'm Melissa, and this here's my sister Chantal, she's 10."

"How old are you?"

"Thirteen. Can you get me a job, my mom needs help with the house? "

That was how I met Melissa, this remarkable young girl with learning disabilities, the eldest child of a single mom, looking after her mentally handicapped kid sister and seeking a job to help out the family.

I didn't get her a job because she was too young, but we began a relationship that continues to this day. During these past twelve years we have been through so much: her abusive boyfriends, sexual abuse from a step-father, legal actions, moves in and out of the community, work with her and her mother, and her own journey into motherhood with two wonderful children.

Like the small child who dared to ask a strange man if he could get her a job, she has never stopped taking risks to improve herself. When counselor Jennifer Lagace started at BBYOS, the two of them established a special therapeutic bond. Melissa trusted Jen to provide that crucial, positive role model. They identified goals and a path to get there. To this day they meet regularly, making sure that Melissa's student grant forms are correct and that she is on top of her assignments because yes, Melissa went on to complete high school and is now in the Personal Support Worker program at Seneca College. As she has vowed ever since the day I met her, nothing is going to stop her from making a healthy and wonderful life for her family.

Melissa's success exemplifies the countless stories of growth, development and courage that unfold everyday here at 41 Blake Street.

This year has been no exception. Along with Melissa, other longtime clients have come through struggle and challenge to reach amazing educational and employment goals. Others have worked to overcome depression or turned their backs on anti-social behaviour and criminality. As our young clients grow up and have children of their own, we are also called on to serve new needs in areas such as parenting and serious parent-child conflict.

We are so proud of all our youth and families, and are honoured that they trust us to help them improve their lives. To do this we need your help as much as ever.

I hope that you will continue to be part of our team by supporting our work through your financial contribution.

Thank you so much and here's to a great year!



Rod Cohen
Executive Director/Therapist
Blake Boulton Youth Outreach Service

Please visit www.bbyos.org if you'd like to donate securely on-line by credit card or Paypal. A tax receipt will be issued for both on-line donations and cheques mailed in.

YES! I want to help these young kids and families to have a healthier and happier life.

Please accept my tax-receiptable gift of:

\$200 _____ \$100 _____ \$75 _____ \$50 _____ Other \$ _____

My cheque payable to BBYOS (41, Blake St., Toronto, ON M4J 3E2) is enclosed

Name: _____

Address: _____

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