

SPOTLIGHT on Kaylee Pletsch

Community Living – Hanover

Kaylee Pletsch is a local young woman that is in the process, despite the odds, of making a life for herself. Kaylee was born with Spina-Bifida is a developmental birth defect caused by the incomplete closure of the embryonic neural tube; some vertebrae overlying the spinal cord are not fully formed and remain unfused and open. At the age of 16, Kaylee was also diagnosed with a long term auditory processing disorder which is common in individuals with spina-bifida.

Despite this learning disability and physical limitations, Kaylee was determined to still make the best of her life. She graduated from John Diefenbaker Secondary School in 2006 and went on to attend Sheridan College in Brampton for post-secondary education. There she was enrolled in the Office Administration: General and Executive from which she graduated in 2009.

In 2010, Kaylee was referred to Jan Schwartz at HARC, through the Y. Working with Jan and HARC helped give Kaylee the confidence she needed to make a lot of changes in a short amount of time in both her personal and professional life. She started to get involved in sports and now not only plays both softball and hockey but is also on the fundraising committee for each sport. Kaylee also got involved in Special Olympics bowling which she has started being involved in the organizing of this fall. When it comes to work, Kaylee is always busy as well, she had a temporary seasonal contract with the Saugeen Valley Conservation Area in the summer for data entry. She very much enjoyed this job and she had her contract extended several times. Kaylee hopes to work with them again in the future and in the meantime is involved with the GO (greater opportunities) program that is offered through the Y. This is a paid job training program that Kaylee feels will be very beneficial in years to come for job hunting as it's giving her the confidence and knowledge she needs to obtain and maintain a steady job.

Besides the many great things Kaylee is involved with, she had made history at HARC for being involved on the HARC board of directors as the first ever self-advocate. She has been on the board since April of this year and it is something that gives Kaylee great pride to be involved in. This young lady is definitely someone everyone can use as an example to not let anything get in the way of accomplishing great things and accepting challenges without giving up.

Quote from Kaylee: "HARC, Jan especially, helped to learn to not use my disability as an excuse because she did not do what most do which is sympathize with me. She listened to my problems, and then helped me find a solution instead of helping me dwell on the issues."