



You Can
**INSPIRE
POSSIBILITIES**



It's time to change the way people who have an intellectual disability engage with their communities. Children, youth and adults who have an intellectual disability should be fully included in all aspects of community life.

From the classroom to the workplace to within a family's home, Community Living Ontario is committed to advancing inclusion for people who have an intellectual disability and their families. Imagine not being able to go to school with friends from your own neighbourhood, or learn side by side with your peers. Imagine growing up and not having an opportunity to explore meaningful employment. To develop friendships with colleagues. To have a choice to live where you want to live and be part of a neighbourhood. Many of us take for granted that we can choose to participate in a place of worship and exercise the right to vote.

For many of our neighbours with intellectual disabilities, these basic things are not guaranteed. They need someone to provide assistance, to educate and support their families and caregivers, and they need a partner to help remove barriers to living fully within their community.

They need you.

COMMUNITY LIVING
Ontario

Who We Are

Community Living Ontario envisions a society where people who have an intellectual disability have the same choices, respect and acceptance, sense of self-worth, and opportunities for growth.

Since 1953, Community Living Ontario has been supporting and strengthening the voice of people who have an intellectual disability, their families, and the broader community by working to increase the understanding that when we all celebrate, support, and acknowledge the value of every person our communities are stronger.

Like you, our donors, supporters, and community partners believe in the value of people and their families. Your investment makes a difference for the whole community, and can truly transform a person's life.



Joel's Story

The Heart of a Community

As Joel approached the end of high school, his parents John and Sue were looking for ways to help him find the best opportunities for his future. There were many programs for young adults with developmental disabilities. But these tended to segregate people like Joel, keeping them separated from the rest of the community.

His parents were determined to find a way for him to have every opportunity. "It might take extra steps, or it may take longer, but it's just about him having a good life."

When they were introduced to Community Living Ontario's Family Leadership Series Sue describes it as a "pivotal moment." She says.

“Everything changed in that moment. That was when we realized how we could make our vision for Joel come to life... it was like someone gave you a template you thought didn't exist!”

Joel has made incredible accomplishments facilitated by what they learned on those weekends and the people and organizations that they were introduced to.

Today, Joel works at a local golf course. The days he works are the patrons' favorite days to play. Joel is also a community builder, volunteer, music-enthusiast and someone who brings everyone together for celebrations and gatherings.

"Joel's involvement in his community has not only expanded his life experiences, but so many others' too" says his mother.





Michael's Story

Define Your Own Potential

When Michael first tried Re:Action4Inclusion as a high school student, he didn't talk much. He was shy and insecure after years of being afraid to say the wrong thing.

But through the Re:Action4Inclusion initiative he found his voice. Re:Action4Inclusion encourages high school students with and without a disability from across Ontario to take a stand. It equips them to play a role in shifting the cultural attitudes within their school. This movement is encouraging youth to rally others in their school to build a stronger sense of community and belonging.

“Re:Action4Inclusion helped me to focus on my strengths,” he says. “They always say it’s ok not to be too sure of yourself.”

It's no surprise that confidence and a positive attitude are ingredients in the recipe for success. Michael credits the program with his confidence. That confidence has taken him further than he ever dreamed.

Michael says he likes to think outside the box. And, despite not being able to read or write,

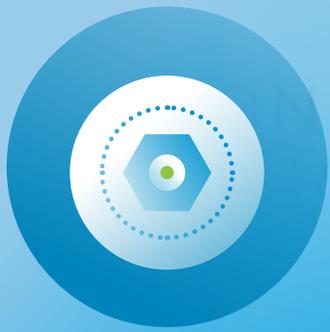
he has written two books using speech-to-text technology. The first, his self-published autobiography, is titled, ‘Can't Read, Can't Write, Here's My Book.’



Michael is modest, but if you talk to his father he'll proudly share an impressive list of accomplishments. Michael holds a part-time job, was appointed to Minister of Education Advisory Committee on Special Education, serves on Welland/Pelham Community Living Board, and presented at the Canadian Conference of Intellectual Disability and Autism in Winnipeg two years in a row. He has been featured on Queen's Commonwealth Trust website. He also won Citizen of the Year in Fonthill in 2019, the youngest person ever to receive it.

“I want to make sure that everybody lives their best selves and reach their potential, not my potential because my potential is completely different than other's potential,” says Michael.

That's what Community Living Ontario is all about – helping everyone live the best life they can, and define their own vision and potential.



COMMUNITY LIVING

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Your Impact

Your gift to the Community Living Ontario Foundation allows over 100 local organizations to work together... and impact the lives of more than 80,000 people across Ontario.

There are four ways your support impacts the community:



1

Strengthen the voices, engagement and influence of people and families;



2

Lead the way in raising awareness and advancing solutions

to the complexity of challenges facing people, families and member organizations through advocacy and social policy;



3

Harness and share knowledge

to drive progress and innovation so that people across Ontario live good lives; and



4

Transfer knowledge and information into practical resources and tools.

Solaiman's Story



Permission to Dream

In early March 2020, Solaiman's parents, Ahmed and Fauzia, watched with pride as Solaiman received his yellow belt in Karate, supported by his brother, Moazzam.

Not long ago, the Reza family would never have imagined that this was possible.

Solaiman was diagnosed with autism at age four. And like any parents, Ahmed and Fauzia wanted to support their son, so they navigated through a lot of research and sought possible opportunities. Eventually, Fauzia was connected to Community Living Ontario.

Participating in Community Living Ontario's Family Leadership Series—whether through in-class discussions or informal chats—opened Fauzia's eyes to how Solaiman could lead a full life in his community.

As Ahmed travels internationally for work, he was not able to join the Family Leadership Series in-person, however, he heard all about it after the sessions. As Fauzia says:

“The big takeaway for me was to explore what my son wants to do in life and not to decide for him. Why should anyone put limits on his dreams?”

Sometimes, Solaiman's behaviours caused concern, or made it difficult for him to participate in all activities. But the Family Leadership Series helped Solaiman and his family imagine new possibilities.



Solaiman's Story

Continued

“The Family Leadership Series starts with identifying the problems and then it goes on to look for different solutions,” said Fauzia. “Sometimes even our best intentions as parents can limit our thinking until we hear from other families and learn from them, too.”

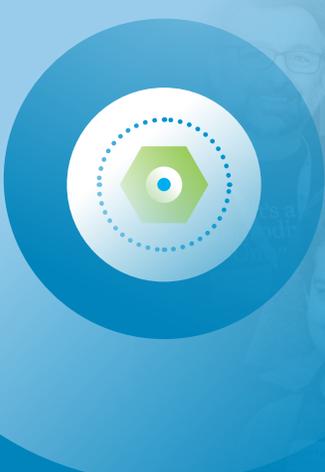
The Series gave Solaiman and his family permission to dream and challenge the low expectations set for Solaiman by his diagnosis. These weekend workshops provided the family with ample time and support to experiment with new ideas.

Today, Solaiman—who turns 17 next month—participates in dance, music, singing and karate. Thanks to Community Living Ontario, he and his family enjoy a greater quality of life, and no longer feel isolated by an Autism diagnosis.

For his part, 19-year-old Moazzam now volunteers as a mentor with Community Living Ontario in his spare time from his studies at the University of Toronto. And Fauzia remains connected to the people that she met through the Family Leadership Series. As she says:

“Prior to attending the Family Leadership Series, I thought that there was hardly anything new for me to learn. Little did I know that Community Living Ontario would help open a door to endless possibilities. Community Living Ontario changes lives.”





Will You Inspire Possibilities Today?

By partnering with Community Living Ontario, you are changing the way people who have an intellectual disability engage with their communities. Your commitment ensures that children, youth, and adults who have an intellectual disability along with their families are fully included in all aspects of community life.

From the classroom to the workplace to within a family's home, Community Living Ontario is committed to advancing inclusion for people who have an intellectual disability and their families. Initiatives like Re:Action4Inclusion pave the way for inclusion and belonging. They change lives like Michael's. Families of loved ones who have an intellectual disability receive support from day one, with weekend retreats. These made a big difference for Joel's and Solomon's parents.

Your support also enables us to work with our partners ensure practical and progressive policies for people who have an intellectual disability.

None of this work would be possible without your support. We encourage you to give today to help inspire possibilities for people who have an intellectual disability.

Learn more about how you can help by contacting:

Heather Evans
Managing Director, Community Living Ontario Foundation

✉ hevans@communitylivingontario.ca

☎ 416-819-5853

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1 Valleybrook Drive, Toronto, Ontario M3B 2S7