Life Saver - Life Changer

Our 40 year old son has now been living in a Chip and Dale home for almost 20 years. The simple truth is that Chip and Dale Homes has been a life saver for our family. Our son comes to our family home for weekly visits and a favorite meal, but then returns to his own home where he is welcomed by friendly faces of familiar staff who have known him for many years. He is happy to come home for a visit, but equally happy to return to his own home for bath time and snacks before bed time.

It hasn`t always been this way!

A son with special needs presents a parent with more challenges than one can imagine. You start off believing your child is normal, but slow to develop in some areas. As the years go by, the truth becomes undeniable. You immerse yourself in special programs and schools to help your child become the best that he can be. Experts rarely agree on the best course of treatment for either medical or behavioural needs. One day at a time is the only way to survive. All family members are required to assist and your life style gradually adjusts to meet the many special needs. Times passes quickly.

Our son was in his late teens when we came to realize how exhausted we were becoming. Our other children were graduating and leaving home to start the next phase of their lives. Our son with special needs was not capable of living on his own and would need support for the rest of his life. We did not have as much energy as we needed after a day of work to meet the challenges of an active teenager who needed lots of physical activity. We realized that as we aged, this gap in energy levels would only increase. There was also the reality that our son would likely outlive us by many years.

We had met parents of other autistic children through the Autism Resource Centre. Some of these parents had succeeded in getting a group home funded by the government and operated by Chip and Dale Homes. They were still involved in their adult child`s life and were happy with the level of care provided. We visited this group home and agreed this would be a good option for our son. We began to lobby for financing and two years later were successful in having Chip and Dale Homes open a new home for 3 young men including our son.

As our son`s physical needs have changed over the years. Chip and Dale Homes found a different house to better meet his needs and insure his safety. Staff in the home are professional and respectful of the needs of all of the residents. A family atmosphere is clearly evident in the home. One long term staff member has told me that he considers the young men in our son’s home like brothers, being they are all of a similar age. As parents, we continue to be involved in planning to meet our son`s needs, but staff are also partners in this process. As aging parents, we are confident this level of care and commitment will continue, even after we are gone.

We would like to express our appreciation to the founding parents of Chip and Dale Homes, for having the courage, foresight and the energy to establish Chip and Dale Homes. We would also like to thank the many staff and Board members who have helped this agency grow and thrive over the years. Finally, thanks to the provincial government for providing the necessary funds to support the valuable work of Chip and Dale Homes.

Murray and Melinda