

**Young Man with Autism in Durham, Disturbing on many fronts.**

On Monday of this week the story broke about a letter opened by the family of a young man with autism. The content of the letter was most disturbing and is under police investigation.

Community Living Upper Ottawa Valley supports and values the principles of inclusion, family support networks, living where and with whom you choose among many other personal outcome measures.

I am not going to speak to the article or the issues within it but to the way it has been reported in hopes that our regional and local media capture something subtle that makes future stories, hopefully more positive ones, different. If you may have missed the news or the related articles here are two links.

[http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2013/08/19/hateful\\_letter\\_about\\_autistic\\_boy\\_sent\\_to\\_newcastle\\_grandmother.html](http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2013/08/19/hateful_letter_about_autistic_boy_sent_to_newcastle_grandmother.html)

<http://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/parents-of-boy-with-autism-unsure-what-they-d-say-to-writer-of-hateful-letter-1.1420172>

Community Living associations have been supporting children and adults with intellectual disabilities for 60 years in Ontario. Most if not all were initiated by families who valued community opportunities much like the Begley family in this story.

Our association was formed 55 years ago and was also built on the same values of family members joining together to create a new way of life that engaged neighbors, community members and other agencies to make the Upper Ottawa Valley area a better place for all.

The media does a great job at supporting our association and others in the area. I only hope in the future one significant yet not so subtle learning takes place.

People First...Disability Second.

I have watched this story unfold for a few days on many media fronts and not once did our news leaders including CTV National introduce him first and his disability second.

It's an easy lesson to take away. You are known by your name and not that you smoke or have red hair. People with a disability have been messaging this right for years. I hope we learn from this and remember that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms includes all citizens, including those with some form of difference.

There are many links regarding People First Canada and other provincial chapters across Canada I encourage readers to visit.

Chris Grayson,  
Executive Director, Community Living Upper Ottawa Valley



P.O. Box 1030, 894 Pembroke Street West  
Pembroke, Ontario, K8A 6Y6

Tel: (613) 735-0659, Fax: (613) 735-1373  
[www.communitylivingupperottawavalley.ca](http://www.communitylivingupperottawavalley.ca)