

Full Circle: Local Caledon family returns to hospital to thank those who cared for them

By Riley Murphy, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Michael Brunetto and his family are no strangers to combating adversity.

The 19-year-old with differing abilities once spent many nights at Holland Bloorview in Toronto recovering from a rare virus.

Now, he's able to return with his family, and they can thank those who once helped him.

Michael was also able to devote a few moments with other young children in the classroom where he once spent many days.

"It feels like yesterday," said his father, Mike Brunetto, "Where we spent many days and nights at the rehabilitation hospital."

It's now been almost two years since Michael was at Holland Bloorview.

When they were at the hospital, Mike Brunetto shared that they were welcomed by caring healthcare workers and like-minded families experiencing the same.

"They have a special place in our hearts," he said, reflecting on their time.

He said the other children were happy to receive a friendly visit from someone who was once there, and is now grateful for the gift of today.

Mike Brunetto is with the CAFFI Community Support Network, and he continues to bring the message home that "these kids and young adults like Michael are heroes, along with their dedicated caregivers".

"Many of them are right in this community, and we need to explore ways to embrace what the future holds, in harmony," said Mike Brunetto.

He is on a mission to create a space for those with complex needs that is truly inclusive.

"Working to set the right size day programs and integrated activities for those with diverse complex needs would be a monumental milestone," said Mike Brunetto, in his volunteer capacity of Community Partnerships and Integration.

He said he feels extremely fortunate that many locals have stepped up recently and want to be a part of these possibilities, where they can enhance their journey through the "Transition to Adulthood."

One of the main focuses is ensuring that individuals with complex needs have a space in the community during these types of transitions.

Part of this ongoing journey includes community events and engagements, such as the upcoming 2nd Annual BBQ with the Network.

Mike said that there is a clear need in the Caledon community, as the attendance has almost tripled this year compared to last.

To learn more about how you can join the conversation and make a difference, visit www.cafficonnect.ca.