

BROCK'S BANTER: A legacy beyond their years

By Brock Weir

When I first had the chance to interview Jennifer Neville on her remarkable children, Daniel and Harry, she was pregnant with her third, ultimately her daughter, Millie. Despite being pregnant and caring for two energetic kids, her own energy was no less diminished in looking forward to their next opportunity to speak about the importance of the War Amps in helping people like her younger son, who became a War Amps Champ, raising awareness in the local Aurora community.

It is tragic that all three of these young voices are no longer with us, but the contributions they were able to make, perhaps even unknowingly, to the community around them, will endure.

Perhaps their legacy will endure in a new avenue as well, prompting action from continued discussions on how to tighten up laws and deterrents combatting drunk driving.

Reprinted here, as requested, is The Auroran's first encounter with the late, extraordinary Neville-Lake boys, as originally published in our May 14, 2013 edition:

Beavers and scouts learn firsthand about being different

When Aurora's 44 Beaver Scouts and Cub Scouts recently performed an activity where crawling was required, young Daniel Neville-Lake stood out a bit from the crowd.

While the kids around him were down on all fours, he was just a little bit closer to the ground as if he was doing a military-style manoeuvre. He had keenly observed his little brother, Harrison, 2, crawling in the same way and believed this to be the norm. After seeing the others, however, he started to question his parents why Harry crawled the way he did ? and their lesson was something they wanted to share with the others.

Harry has significant challenges with his arms. He was born in 2010 missing a thumb on his left hand, missing part of the radial bone on the same arm, and a non-functioning thumb on his right.

Shortly after his birth, the family were referred to the Hospital for Sick Children due to other difficulties surrounding the birth, and there they went to their plastic clinic to see if they could do anything to help with his limbs.

While there, the occupational therapist suggested they contact War Amps to see if they could help them in any way. He was readily accepted into their War Amps CHAMPS programs for young amputees and the group put them in contact with other families in similar circumstances.

It is through the War Amps that this particular CHAMP was teamed up with CHAMP graduate Tiffany McCormack, 26, to teach Daniel and his fellow Beavers and Cubs about amputations.

?'[Daniel] didn't realise there was anything different about Harry,?' says their mother, Jennifer Neville. ?'He was just his younger brother, four and a half years apart. [After they crawled] Daniel asked me, ?'Why does Harry crawl differently?' and I explained it is because Harrison can't do that and that is how he figured out how to do it.

?'He started hitching up his brother's pants getting him to crawl properly, so I decided we should ask the War Amps to see if there is something they can do to help Daniel understand that his brother is different, but also that it is okay and not a scary thing, because he was getting upset at night.?'

At the session held on Murray Drive, Ms. McCormack and young Harrison highlighted the War Amps' ?'Winner' Circle Philosophy? that ?'with dedication and a positive attitude, the sky's the limit for an amputee.?'

?'I think these presentations help Daniel and some of his friends understand that even if some kids are different, it is not a bad thing,?' says Jennifer. ?'Everybody is different and they all do things differently.?'

The organization marks their 95th anniversary this year and to the Neville-Lake family, they have been a lifesaver in terms of helping them understand the challenges ahead, as well as the support they offer both emotionally and physically to families.

Such supports include regular seminars for parents, during which War Amps covers their accommodations, where they can learn about the various resources available to them, as well as valuable assistance when it comes to covering prosthetics.

?'If Harrison is interested in doing sports or needs something adapted with an assisted device to do some things, which is not covered by the government if it is considered recreational,?' says Jennifer. ?'The government will only cover things necessary for day-to-day

living. Extra limbs can cost thousands, such as \$27,000 for a stationary hockey arm because they are custom made. War Amps will pay for that.?

Such challenges were evident in the early days of Harry's life. Inundated with a seemingly endless round of appointments, their King-based grandparents offered to step up to the plate and take Daniel in as they got settled. It was in King when the family first got involved in the Aurora troop and now that everyone is settled and Daniel has gone back living with his parents in Brampton, they are still regulars with the Aurora troop and what they have to offer.

?We have been in scouting for years. I was a girl guide growing up. My dad was a Beaver leader. My brother went through Beavers and my sister through Girl Guides with me, it is something that was really important to me. When I met them last year, I was like, it was a little bit different coming in as a parent but there was something cool about how it was run and what I saw the kids get out of it that I really liked it.

?We have done the Santa Under the Stars parade out there, Remembrance Day, and we've sold Apples at the corner of Henderson and Yonge. Daniel and I did that when I was six months pregnant last year in October on a rainy day!?