

Ryan Grants unite for \$1,000 donation to Able Network



By Brock Weir

It was a meeting two weeks in the making but when Ryan Grant, a client at Aurora's Able Network cast eyes on Ryan Grant, the area manager for Cobs Bread, it was an instant and emotional connection.

The dynamic duo met on the porch of Trinity Anglican Church's rectory, home of Able Network, which provides mentorship, career and job opportunities for York Region residents living with Down Syndrome, and their families.

The Ryan Grants were joined by staff, volunteers, family and friends as Ryan Grant, the client, made a \$1,000 donation to the organization that has helped him find his independence within the community.

As The Auroran reported last month, Mr. Grant, the client, had his bag stolen from him at the York Region Transit bus stop at the northeast corner of Yonge and Wellington. This was no ordinary bag. Containing his brand new bus pass and cell phone, it had all the things that allow Ryan to live an independent life.

Following the family going public with the story, there was an immediate outpouring from Aurora and Newmarket.

Jackie Playter of Newmarket's Roadhouse and Rose Funeral Home immediately opened the doors of her family's business to take in donations for Ryan while businesses like Cobs Bread and Boston Pizza stepped up with gift card donations which were sold as fundraisers. But, buy this time, Ryan's family had already replaced everything he needed and he decided to give everything back to Able.

"I think it is just amazing," says Able's Barb Allen. "It shows how his character has developed over the years. He started with us in 2008 as one of our first participants. To be honest, he has just grown so much over the years since he has been here; to be able to take the bus by himself and to make good decisions like this for the community. He has a lot to give and offer the community, including sending this onto us, which is wonderful. Ryan is doing amazing.

"I knew the community was full of good people, but I did not necessarily think this was going to happen to us. People who know of my connection to Able were contacting me [about the initial story] and saying it is just so awful. It shows the community is full of really great people I knew that, but it is great to see them all come together with Ryan to support him."

Ms. Playter, one of the "great people" Ms. Allen refers to, was on hand to present Ryan with the \$1,000 that had been collected, as well as cards and signatures from people from across the communities "and as far away as Nova Scotia and British Columbia, and

Ryan was ecstatic not only to hand the money over to Able but take the greetings home with him.

?Newmarket and Aurora are fantastic communities,? said Ms. Playter. ?No matter what you do, when you ask people, they will help ? but they have to be asked. A lot of times you just don't think to ask. I asked everyone for \$20 and we ended up making \$1,000! If there is a wrong done, you can right it. You can always look to righting the wrongs and helping the people who are harmed. If you come across anyone who has been harmed, you need to jump in there and help them because it is just the right thing to do.?

Ryan Grant, the manager, said he agreed: ?I heard the story and I put myself into his place and asked if I were in his place how I would feel. With our names being similar he automatically gravitated towards me and came with a big hug, shook my hand, and introduced me to all his friends here as well. We were able to quickly relate to each other. You could see how appreciative he was, jumping up and down, and that is exactly what this is about. It's priceless. It makes what I do that much better.?