



# Almost Home News

## Adam's Story

Theresa Nelson & Nancy Daugulis

In the family room at Almost Home, there's a hardcover journal with the title Families Helping Families and an invitation for families to "**Share some advice, kind words or encouragement with other families**".

Over the years, a number of Almost Home families have shared their stories. Some are written at a time of great joy, when a child has been released from hospital and it's time to go home, for example, or after a successful surgery. Some are very sad. And many (the majority) tell of journeys that are still unfolding, with children who need ongoing treatment for complex medical conditions.

One of the longer entries in the book was written by Theresa Nelson, a young mother of two from Belleville. Her four year old daughter Grace has always been a healthy little girl. But young Adam, now two and a half, has taken his family on a roller coaster ride through the health care system.

Here is "Adam's Story", as written by Theresa in Families Helping Families on April 23, 2009, when Adam was six and a half months old.

*My son Adam was in hospital from the time he was born (October 4, 2008) until he was nearly five months old. Did quite a bit of travelling, when he got transferred to CHEO (Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario) in Ottawa.*

*We had Adam in Belleville General. They did an emergency caesarean because his heart rate kept dropping.*

*After he was born, his lung collapsed. Three hours after he was born he was in ICU and then being airlifted to KGH NICU because he had a heart murmur, which led to my WORST fear. Was he*



Grace, Theresa and Adam

*going to die?*

*He spent three days in the NICU and then was airlifted to CHEO, where he was going to have open heart surgery. SCARY! On October 14, at ten days old, he had a 10 hour open heart surgery. What a long day! He had two interrupted aortic arches, PDA, VSD and two holes in his heart. The operation was a **SUCCESS**.*

*Then, one month later he had another surgery on his diaphragm for his collapsed lung. That also went well. We were in Ottawa for two months*

*Then they decided to transfer him back to KGH but this time down in paediatrics to work on feeding. After the open heart surgery a vocal cord was paralyzed so it was difficult to feed him by bottle. We were at KGH for one month, then they transferred us to our*

*home hospital in Belleville to continue feeds. After six weeks in Belleville Adam weighed 5 kilos and was sent back to Kingston for a G-tube placement since he wasn't bottling. But now he's doing great with bottling. (Still has the G-tube.)*

*Adam came home for the first time on February 23, 2009 and is doing well. He weighed 12 lbs 6 ozs as of yesterday.*

*We still come to Almost Home 1 or 2 times a month for appointments. Just like to say thanks to Almost Home for continuing to have us visit. To the other families, **Even though times are hard it will get better. Just believe.***

*Thank you staff and volunteers for being so kind. We appreciate you all so much. Theresa, Nathan, Adam and Grace, Belleville, Ontario.*

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## SPRING 2011 WISH LIST

Like any home, "Almost Home" is always in need of household supplies. Any donations of the following items would be greatly appreciated!

### Pantry/Kitchen Supplies

- White sugar
- Peanut butter
- Jam
- Honey
- Ketchup & mustard
- Non-perishable food items (i.e. canned stew & chili, pasta, Kraft Dinner, etc.)

### Household Supplies

- Standard size CFL light bulbs
- Liquid hand soap
- Powdered laundry soap
- Fabric softener sheets
- Liquid dish soap
- Liquid dishwasher detergent
- Dishwasher rinsing agent
- Paper towels
- Toilet tissue
- Kleenex
- Clorox wipes
- All-purpose cleaner (Mr. Clean)

### Linens

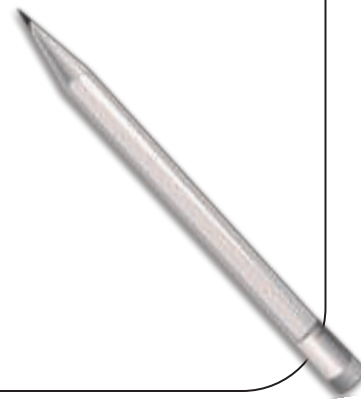
- Twin bedsheets, fitted & flat (yellow or white)

### Gifts for Children & Families

- Gift cards for area grocery & discount stores
- Taxi vouchers & bus tickets
- Pre-paid long-distance calling cards
- Travel-sized toiletries

### Other Items

- Universal remote controls
- Movies (on DVD) for children and families



To all those who have donated wish list items in the past, thank you!

We would also like to send out an extra special thank you to Meredith (Eligh) Sexton for donating a digital camera - the special project from the fall edition of the newsletter. The camera has been a great asset to us as we capture the special moments here at Almost Home.

## Volunteering at Almost Home

Donna McNeill

My Almost Home story began in 1987 - a few years prior to Almost Home's opening. Our son, Sean, was born on Easter Sunday, April 19, 1987 and thus began our journey with a sick child and the difficulties that brings to any family. I had a



healthy pregnancy so I did not expect our new son to have congenital birth defects that would see him flown off to Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children within ten hours of his birth, or that he would have major gastrointestinal surgeries performed by midnight of his first day to repair his very serious problems. We

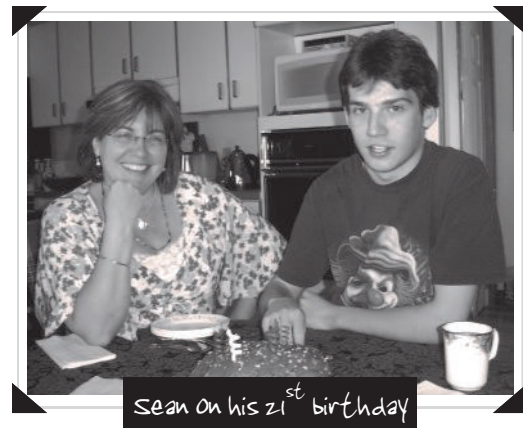
had entered the surreal world of sick babies and their unique care.

I was an extremely fortunate mom as my son "could be fixed" and my brother lived twenty-odd blocks from Sick Kids Hospital. In the six weeks I spent in Toronto I had plenty of time to reflect on how lucky I was when all around me there were parents who faced the stress of caring for a fragile child and were themselves in less than desirable circumstances, often far from home and family support.

Sometime after Sean's second birthday I received a call from a group that was doing a study on the needs of parents who had sick children. Because we often travelled to Toronto for follow-up appointments, the study group wanted to ask me what my wants and needs were when I was away from home. I did

not have experience with programs such as Ronald Macdonald house but I certainly knew that our success in this healthcare journey was due in part to the home-like normalcy that I was able to access at my brother's house. On several occasions I shared my thoughts and answered questionnaires with the study group which was gathering information to begin Almost Home in Kingston.

At that time I knew that this would be a beautiful place for families and I placed volunteering with Almost Home on my "list of things to do" when I had more time.



Well, in 2010 I finally had more time. Sean is now almost 24 years old - healthy and vibrant - and I am so pleased to be able to support families who are now experiencing their own surreal journeys. With proper supports children can get better quicker and their families can survive the difficulties of travelling and staying away from home. 🍀

## Adam's Story...

Continued from Page 1



Adam and Theresa still come to Kingston every month or two. According to Theresa, Adam is doing well and is now walking; but "he has many doctors, including his heart specialist, feeding team, gastric tube specialist and many more - 15 in total between Belleville, Kingston, Toronto and Ottawa. He still gets the odd chest infection which leads us into the emerg sometimes."

Grace is now in Junior Kindergarten and has achieved her yellow belt in karate. Theresa feels lucky to have had the support of her husband, Nathan Mouck, who has usually stayed behind to take care of Grace while Theresa and Adam travel to appointments.

Many of the families who stay with us at Almost Home return for multiple visits to multiple specialists. Parents become experts on their child's medical condition(s), and very effective advocates for their care. Staff and volunteers get to know the families well. With 18 stays and counting, Theresa and Adam are not just familiar faces at Almost Home, but good friends! 🍀



## HELP US SAVE POSTAGE & TREES



Are you willing to receive your Almost Home newsletter electronically?  
Simply send your name and current mailing and e-mail addresses to...

[jenniferv@almosthome.on.ca](mailto:jenniferv@almosthome.on.ca)



## What it Means to be a Volunteer

*Sharon Beveridge*

I'm a volunteer.

**Vol-un-teer (vol'en tir):** a person who performs or offers a service voluntarily, to perform or offer to perform a service of one's own free will, to do charitable work or helpful work without pay, a person who chooses freely to do or offer to do something.

Yup - that's me! Sharon Beveridge... wife, mother, teacher, friend, aunt, sister, daughter, mother-in-law and, "yes", a volunteer.

You might ask...."How does one person who is so many things to so many people find the time to volunteer"? Well... it's easy. I think one of the reasons I find it easy is that at my age (not declared) I have experienced my share of life's hardships and joys and therefore am able to share some of my experience and knowledge with those who are in need of a listening ear.

That is what drew me to Almost Home almost twenty years ago. Sheila Billings, a long time friend, told me about Almost Home and asked if I would I be interested in becoming a volunteer. It didn't take me long to say "yes, I would be delighted".

Almost Home was fairly new at that time, with Mary Golbourne at the helm. We all felt that we were a part of something very special, which would become an integral part of the Kingston community in a very short space of time. After a few months of being one of the Almost Home family of volunteers, I knew I had made the right decision. Not only was I able to give back to the community in a small way, but I was able to help and guide some fragile people along the way.

The wonderful thing about volunteering is that you have your own life to live but find it is very important to be able to give back. Almost Home certainly fills the bill for me.



My life outside "the house" is very full. I still supply teach for the Limestone Board of Education, am active in my wonderful church, St.Mark's Barriefield; I quilt, I sew, I like to knit up a storm as well as cook and entertain alongside my very supportive husband John. I play a pretty good game of bridge and will indulge in Old Maid and Snap with my grandchildren. Life is never dull. Almost Home has made it that way. I always look forward to my Sunday shift. You never know what lies ahead when you arrive at Almost Home.

Not sure what to do with your time? Volunteer... it's the best way to go. 🐾

### What's New with Your Family?

**In 2012, Almost Home will be celebrating 20 years of helping families with sick children.**

**If your family has stayed with us, whether it was for a few days or for many months, we'd love to hear from you. Tell us what you remember about your stay at Almost Home, and bring us up to date with what's happening in your lives.**

**Send us an e-mail at [lauriem@almosthome.on.ca](mailto:lauriem@almosthome.on.ca), or drop us a line at Almost Home, 118 William St., PO Box 2204, Kingston ON, K7L 5J9.**

**We'll share some of your stories in our 2012 Newsletters and on our website.**

# The Spirit of Giving

Laurie Morgan

**Master Bedroom** and **Natural Rest** have teamed up to provide Almost Home with four new mattresses and box spring sets so that our families can get a restful night's sleep. We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to owner Jim Parkinson, Kingston store manager Kris Parkinson, and Natural Rest owner Brett Short. Master Bedroom is located at 645 Gardiners Road, Kingston and 393 Sidney Street in Belleville and has been operating for over eighteen years.



Each year at Christmas time Almost Home closes its doors for approximately ten days to allow our volunteers to spend quality time with their own families and friends. During the closure, local hotels step up and accommodate the families whose children must remain in Kingston for treatment. We would like to sincerely thank the following hotels for their continued support to Almost Home in this way: the **Ambassador Conference Resort, Comfort Inn, Confederation Place Hotel, Four Points by Sheraton** and **Residence Inn by Marriott**.



We would also like to thank **Swish Kingston** for donating three brand new vacuum cleaners to Almost Home. We reached out to Swish Kingston in the middle of February and one week later they showed up on our doorstep with the vacuum cleaners. Now that's service!



The employees of **Bardon Supplies Ltd.** raised \$400.00 for Almost Home at their summer barbecues. They have also contributed to Almost Home in other ways by donating items to our Annual Golf Tournament. We would like to thank Bardon Supplies for their continued support.



**Please support the businesses that support our families!**



Almost Home was the recipient of \$3,000.00 from the Queen's University's Entertainment Club. The **Queen's Players** wish was to donate a percentage of their earnings to an organization that was greatly involved in the Kingston community. These contributions go a long way to help the families we serve. Thank you!

The 5th Annual Invitational Mixed Bonspiel at the **Cataraqi Curling Club** ("The Tradition") raised \$4,300.00 for Almost Home this year. This amount exceeded our expectations and we are very happy to receive such a generous donation. Well done curlers!

Do you know the true meaning of Christmas? 12 year old **Monica Cassell** does. Last year, with Christmas approaching,

Monica decided she wanted to focus on the spirit of giving. She decided to build a gingerbread house and raffle it off to the members of **St. Joseph's Church**. Monica raised over \$200.00 and donated the money to Almost Home. The staff and volunteers were very excited about this fundraiser and want to thank Monica for her inspiration and hard work. ♣



## Grants Help Almost Home Help Families

Laurie Morgan

In the fall of 2010, Almost Home was the proud recipient of a grant of \$2,486.00 from the **Rotary Club of Cataraqi-Kingston** for the renovation of one of our family rooms. The Rotary Club of Cataraqi-Kingston provides opportunities for community leaders to work together to support various causes at both the local and international level. We are very appreciative to them for including us as one of the many organizations that they support each year.



The **Canadian Million Dollar Round Table** granted Almost Home \$1,177.00 to help with the cost of designing and printing a new brochure. The Canadian Million Dollar Round Table Foundation is funded by top life insurance professionals and awards grants annually to a variety of charities in communities across Canada. We would like to sincerely thank the CMDRT for the generous grant, and Marty

Stover for being our Knight Sponsor and a continuing supporter of Almost Home.

The **United Way of Kingston** generously granted Almost Home \$1,000.00 to purchase a new dishwasher for the house. The United Way supports local human care needs through programs and services in the City of Kingston and the counties of Frontenac, Lennox and Addington. The new dishwasher was a great addition to our newly renovated kitchen. Thank you!



### Bridge Street Church foundation

The **Bridge Street Church Foundation** donated \$1,150.00 for us to reupholster our kitchen chairs and buy new table tops. The Bridge Street Foundation was formed following a generous bequest left by Charlotte E. Sills who passed away in 1973. Many organizations have benefited from this foundation and Almost Home is grateful to be among them. ♣

# May is Almost Home Month!

*20<sup>th</sup> Annual*

## BID OF ENTERTAINMENT

**Thursday May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2011 • Doors open at 6:00 pm**

Sponsored by:  Bay of Quinte Mutual  
INSURANCE CO.

Hosted by: The Kingston Banquet and Conference Centre at Days Inn

Media Sponsor: 98.3 FLY FM

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*19<sup>th</sup> Annual*


## Investors Group Almost Home

## GOLF TOURNAMENT

**Friday May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

Sponsored by:  Investors  
Group™

Hosted by:  Rivendell Golf Club

2 Tee Times Available:  8:00 am Shotgun or 1:30 pm Shotgun

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For ticket information or sponsorship opportunities  
for either of the above events please call (613) 548-3987,  
or visit our website at [www.almosthome.on.ca](http://www.almosthome.on.ca)



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**The Almost Home Mission** is to provide a place of comfort and respite for families whose children are receiving medical treatment in Kingston area hospitals.

## News Flashes

- 🏠 On January 1, 2011 our House Manager, Laurie Morgan, was promoted to Executive Director. Laurie is very excited about her new role and looks forward to her new responsibilities.
- 🏠 Almost Home's Annual General Meeting will be held at Investors Group Financial Services located at 100-1000 Gardiners Road in Kingston on Thursday, April 28<sup>th</sup> at 6:00pm.
- 🏠 The 2010 Annual Campaign raised over \$24,000.00! Thank you to all of our donors for your generous contributions.
- 🏠 We would love to take you on a tour of our home. Please call Laurie Morgan to arrange a time at 613-548-8255.
- 🏠 Important dates...
  - Thursday May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2011: 20<sup>th</sup> Annual **Bid of Entertainment**
  - Friday May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2011: 19<sup>th</sup> Annual **Golf Tournament**
  - Saturday June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2011: 4<sup>th</sup> Annual "**Love Life**" **Bash**
 See inside for more details!



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