

Ahead of His Time

Community builder Dan Lajoie attended the K-W Rotary Children’s Centre more than 40 years ago but still recalls passing the receptionist’s desk as he came to school each day. Eyeing the adding machine on her desk with the tape of paper, Dan would always stop and play with it for a few minutes. To this day, that is his favourite memory.

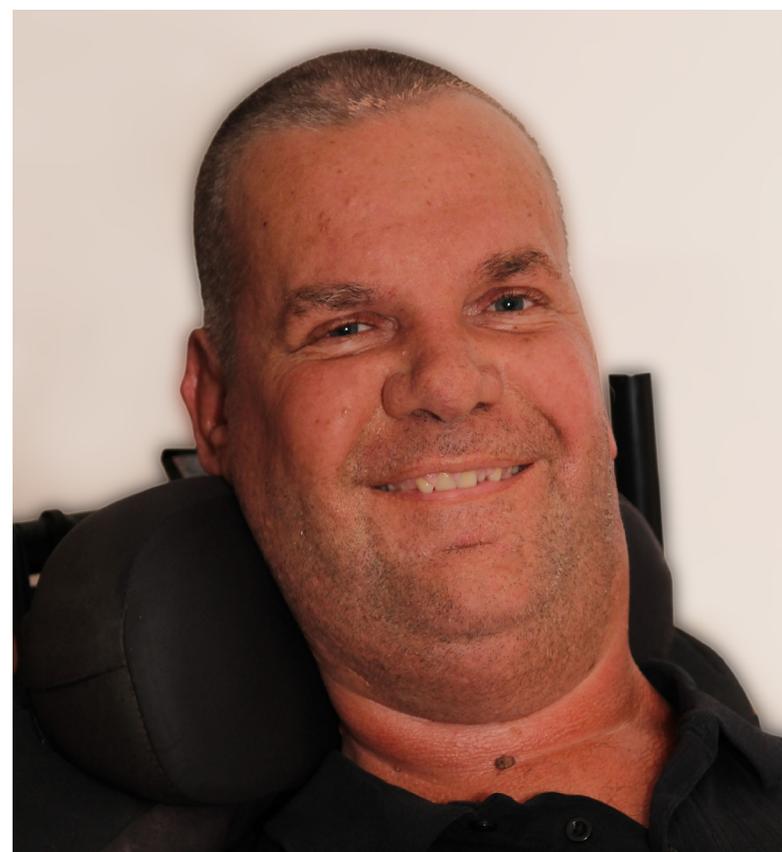
Dan first came to the Rotary Centre when he was three years old in a stroller. By the time he left, Dan was using an electric wheelchair. “At the time, I was the youngest ever to be fitted for an electric wheelchair.” Nowadays, electric wheelchairs are extremely common not only at KidsAbility, but in the community. Back then, they were rare, so much so that Dan’s electric wheelchair as a child garnered local television coverage!

Wheelchairs in the early 1980’s were not often seen in mainstream schools. This concerned Dan’s parents at the time because it meant that he would be forced to go to a special school — something they did not want for Dan. Therapists and staff at The Rotary Centre provided support and advocacy, helping Dan to be able to attend a mainstream school.

“The first word that comes to mind when I think of KidsAbility is ‘helpful,’” says Dan. Many years later, long after Dan’s days of physiotherapy, occupational therapy and seating clinic appointments growing up, he was able to give back to the organization that was a fixture in his life serving on the KidsAbility Board of Directors from 2006 to 2008. “I had the opportunity as an adult to give back to this phenomenal organization and sit on the Board. Working with people like Stephen Swatridge was wonderful,” remarks Dan. He adds that KidsAbility sets the standard for accessing special care for children with special needs. “It’s an anchor for parents.”

Dan is married, has two children and is working in the accessible housing sector. He has these words of advice to share with parents beginning their journey: “Continue to have hope. Focus on your kid, they have needs aside from their disability. And, be patient — in time everything will work out.”

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Dan Lajoie

Alumnus and
Board Member - KidsAbility 2006–2008