

Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders



H: Parent Stories *Courtney's Story*

By Carleana De Kelder

Courtney at a quick glance: In 1998, I had some concerns about Courtney's speech development at the age of 3. It took me several months but finally Courtney was able to get involved with and received intervention through tykeTALK, the Preschool Speech and Language Program in the Thames Valley (London) region.

I took advantage of her December birth and I kept her home from Junior Kindergarten. Courtney and I continued to work with tykeTALK to improve her speech, language and social skills. Courtney transitioned into school for Senior Kindergarten. She attends Sir Isaac Brock P.S, which has been a good choice.

Courtney's improvements sometimes make it hard to remember where she's come from. Little reminders are nice when trying to keep focused on her goals and goals set for her. Which brings me to the purpose of this letter. It's been four years since Courtney's first intervention...

Courtney is now in grade two. Through all the obstacles Courtney and I have overcome this year, we have learned of some other "challenges" Courtney has. Personally, I think the biggest 'challenge' Courtney has is people who either can't or don't take the time to listen to her (but that's this parent's opinion).

While her communication marks are low, Courtney seems to maintain a B average in most everything else. She is not on an IEP (Individual Education Plan), but she does have a STF (student tracking form), which lists the 'accommodations' being made to maintain 'main stream' curriculum for her.

This week is Education Week. Our school has a 'Lollipop Festival'. This provides children in the primary grades with an opportunity to pick a subject they are interested in, prepare a speech and present it to their class. If it is presented well and they are interested they can present it to the primary classes during the festival. And YES!!!!!!!!!!!!.....

Courtney did this!

Our little speech-delayed blossom (Courtney De Kelder aka - Molly Brown) prepared a speech on her favourite thing in the whole world - Elephants. This morning, before a live audience of seven classes and other spectators, she confidently and clearly presented her speech on elephants.

I suppose the bottom line is, if Courtney wasn't ever going to be able to do this, perhaps she never could have. However, there has been a WHOLE team of people that have played a role in Courtney's achievements. It would have been a lot easier to accept some of the comments that 'I

expect too much', or that 'Your expectations may be too high' (for example). But she, like many of her peers, are neither 'stupid' kids nor are they children that 'can't' achieve such goals.

Perhaps the largest difference in the success stories and the non-success stories lie in the support. Children need to have someone who advocates for them, and says, I don't buy this "idea", at least not yet. For parents the first step is to believe in your child. Then put together a 'team', get the 'tools', and 'practice'. We all know that communication is more than just talking.

As tykeTALK was the first intervention Courtney and I received, I wanted to share yet another success story of hers with you and the tykeTALK team.

Thank you, tykeTALK. Thank you, Debbie!!!!

Carleana De Kolver

(This story was previously shared with the tykeTALK audience (in 2001?), and Carleana also agreed to share her story with OAFCCD members.)