

SEAC Members recognized for Outstanding Contributions

Two Easter Seals Ontario representatives on their school board Special Education Advisory Committees (SEAC) have been recognized for their outstanding contributions in support of students with special education needs. Sherry Caldwell has been recognized with the **Yes I Can Parent Award** by the Council for Exceptional Children, York Region Chapter 543, and Alison Morse has been recognized with an **Award of Distinction** by the Thames Valley District School Board.

The Yes I Can Parent Award, recognizes parents have contributed to the welfare of exceptional children and youth by encouraging the awareness and influencing the attitudes of parents, teachers, administrators and local communities with regards to the needs of exceptional children and youth.



Sherry Caldwell
(centre) with her
family (l to r)
Damon, Ashley,
Taylor and Ian.

Sherry Caldwell tirelessly advocates for all exceptional

children and youth through her volunteer work, program implementation and by challenging expectations to benefit exceptional children. She is influential in changing attitudes of parents, teachers and administrators by engaging in courageous conversations to advocate for her daughter and to ensure that Ashley has the absolute best school experience possible. Because of this, her daughter continues to amaze and astound us with her ability to walk and communicate, often exceeding expectations.

Not only does Sherry advocate for her daughter, she advocates for many exceptional children. She does this as a member of the York Region District School Board (YRDSB) SEAC representing Easter Seals and her community involvement. Most recently she received the Town of Richmond Hill's Volunteer Achievement Award for championing a library program that allowed children who use augmentative communication to connect with other kids and families who also use devices and technology to communicate.

She gives tirelessly of her time connecting with other families to ensure that exceptional children have inclusive experiences with their peers.

Sherry has an astounding attitude and ability to connect with other parents with exceptional children. This past April, she was invited to be a presenter at a parent conference entitled "Keys to Special Needs Education." She was a member of the panel that included parents and speech pathologists. Her insight and ability to share her own daughter's experience encourages and inspires others who are also on a similar journey.

To watch Sherry's video presentation from the Keys to Special Education Conference, see the [Implementing AAC for Successful Communication](#), which is available with other webcasts from the conference on the blog, [Keys to Special Education Webcasts](#).

The Award of Distinction was established by Trustees at the Thames Valley District School Board Trustees in 2000 to recognize members of the school community who make a significant impact on improving student learning. Recipients are recognized for outstanding contributions, such as: supporting students with special needs; going above and beyond expectations; giving strength to student voice; increasing student pride and improving overall student well-being. This esteemed group includes individuals from teaching, the student population, facilities, volunteers, administration, instructional and educational assistants, safety and special education.



Alison Morse (right) with Thames Valley District School Board Chair, Bill McKinnon, and Director, Laura Elliot.

Alison Morse has been an advocate for Thames Valley and students for over 20 years. She has contributed to many initiatives that affect the system, including the Special Education Advisory Committee, the Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders, The

Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education, and the Speech Integration Pilot Project. These are just a sample of her work within the District. She has been particularly active in the areas of communication, working with teams to increase communication between families and schools. Alison has passionately and tirelessly worked at putting the needs of students first. She has created change not only in Thames Valley , but across Ontario through her work on province wide initiatives including the Special Needs Strategy, which will improve collaboration between Ministries to support students with complex needs and their families. Alison's advocacy brings people together with positive energy and purpose. She recognizes that partnerships are powerful and works hard to create and lead partnerships that produce results. She consistently puts the needs of students first, actively engages students, staff and families in our community, and inspires new ideas and innovation.