



The "Special Needs" Planner

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Enriching Lives

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ODSP Benefit Enhancement

Earlier this year, the Ontario Disability Support Program announced several changes to the regulations. One change of particular note is the increase of voluntary payments that may be received by a recipient of ODSP benefits from trust funds and other sources. Previously, a person could receive up to \$4,000 in a twelve month period. This amount has been increased to \$5,000. These funds can be received in addition to unlimited amounts that are for disability related items.

In addition, when we think of ODSP benefits, we often limit our thoughts to the monthly cheque, drug card, dental card and vision care. However, the ODSP also provides a variety of other benefits. Some additional benefits are:

- Employment Start Up Benefits - up to \$235 over a 12 month period for start up costs related to employment.
- Advanced Child Care Costs - if a return to work requires up front child care expenses funds can be made available.
- Community Start Up Costs - up to \$799 for a single applicant or \$1500 for a benefit unit with one or more dependents to provide financial assistance to establish a new principal residence or to remain in their existing residence.
- Excessive Heating Cost Payment.
- Home Repairs - required to permit a recipient to continue residing in their primary residence.
- Assistive Devices Program - pays the ODSP recipient's portion and will also pay for an assessment for an assistive device.

- Guide Dog Benefit - \$64.00 per month is available for recipients who have a trained guide dog.
- Hearing Aids - ODSP will cover the portion of the hearing aid cost not covered by ADP and also covers replacement batteries and appropriate repairs.
- Mandatory Special Necessities - covers Medical Transportation, Diabetic Supplies and Surgical Supplies and Dressings.
- Mobility Devices, Batteries and Repairs - covers batteries and repairs to manual or electric wheelchairs, scooters and walkers.
- Vision Care Benefits - eye exams not covered by OHIP every 24 months and new frames and lenses every 36 months.
- Back to School and Winter Clothing Allowances.
- Low Cost Energy Conservation Measures - one time payment of up to \$50.00 to assist with payment of low cost energy conservation measures to principal residence.

Each of these additional benefits have specific qualification criteria that must be met. A detailed exploration of the criteria should be undertaken if you wish to apply for these benefits.

RRSP Update

Beginning in 2003, we have been following the progress of the Federal Government's actions to allow an RRSP or RRIF to be left to a person with a disability by their Parents or Grandparents. Minister of Finance, Ralph Goodale, released an announcement of the amendments that will be tabled in Parliament in the Fall of 2005. One of these amendments relates to the rules providing for a tax deferral in respect of amounts transferred from an RRSP to a disabled dependant. We look on in anticipation of a positive result for our community. We will keep you posted.

A Little Boy and His Puppy

A Store owner was tacking a sign above his door that read "Puppies for Sale". The signs have a way of attracting children. Soon a little boy appeared at the sign and asked, "How much are you gonna sell those puppies for?". The store owner replied, "Anywhere from \$30-\$50. "The little boy reached into his pocket and pulled out some change. "I have \$2.37, can I look at them?" The store owner smiled and whistled. Out of the kennel came his dog named Lady, running down the aisle of his store followed by five little puppies. One puppy was lagging considerably behind. Immediately the little boy singled out the lagging, limping puppy. He asked "What's wrong with that little dog? The man explained that when the puppy was born the vet said that this puppy had a bad hip socket and would limp for the rest of his life.

The little boy got really excited and said "That's the puppy I want to buy!" The man replied "No, you don't want to buy that little dog. If you really want him, I'll give him to you." The little boy got upset. He looked straight into the man's eye sand said "I don't want you to give him to me. He is worth every bit as much as the other dogs and I'll pay the full price. In fact I will give you \$2.37 now and 50 cents every month until I have him paid for."

The man countered, "You really don't want to buy this puppy son. He is never gonna be able to run, jump and play like other puppies." The little boy reached down and rolled up his pant leg to reveal a badly twisted left leg supported by a big metal brace. He looked up at the man and said, "Well, I don't run so well myself and the little puppy will need someone who understands." The man was now biting his bottom lip. Tears welled up in his eyes....He smiled and said, "Son,I hope and pray that each and everyone of these puppies will have an owner such as you."

IN LIFE, IT DOESN'T MATTER WHO YOU ARE,
BUT WHETHER SOMEONE APPRECIATES YOU
FOR WHAT YOU ARE, ACCEPTS YOU AND
LOVES YOU UNCONDITIONALLY. A REAL
FRIEND IS ONE WHO WALKS IN WHEN THE
REST OF THE WORLD WALKS AWAY.

A Wonderful Story

Some people understand life better than others. And they call some of these people "retarded". At the Seattle Special Olympics, nine contestants, all physically or mentally disabled, assembled at the starting line for the 100-yard dash. At the gun, they all started out, not exactly in a dash, but with a relish to run the race to the finish and win. All, that is, except one little boy who stumbled on the asphalt, tumbled over a couple of times, and began to cry. The other eight heard the boy cry. They slowed down and looked back. Then they all turned around and went back.....every one of them. One girl with Down's Syndrome bent down and kissed him and said, "This will make it better." Then all nine linked arms and walked together to the finish line. Everyone in the stadium stood, the cheering went on for several minutes. People who were there are still telling the story...Why? Because deep down we know this one thing: What matters in this life is more than winning for ourselves. What matters in this life is helping others win, even if it means slowing down and changing our course.

From the Editor:

Our lives often become far too focused on the facts and figures of our family member' sdisabilities. Sometimes we just need to read something for the pleasure it provides. I have found these short stories to be an inspiration and a joy to me and hope that they have a special place in your hearts too. Over the years, people have forwarded them to me knowing that they need to be shared with people in our community. If you have any inspirations like these, I' d love to hear from you.

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