



December 2017

Welcome to the Rainbow Caregivers Network. I'm so glad you could join us!

As 2017 comes to a close I have the opportunity to reflect on the changes that have happened in my life over the past year. So many new friends and colleagues, so much joy, and a little bit of sorrow. But in the end one word comes to mind: BEGINNINGS.

When our son came out in August of 2016 my (cis-gender-heterosexual) partner and I had no idea what that meant. We had no context for raising a transgender child. We didn't know what that meant for us or for him, and we certainly weren't aware of any transgender people in our community. Then in September of this year our daughter came out as pansexual. We were lucky. We met people locally who were knowledgeable, connected, and willing to share their experiences and expertise so we could best care for our amazing kids. It really does take a village to raise a child, and we are incredibly grateful to live in a community where there is so much support.

In the beginning that support was hard to find. When I was searching for peer support for my son I decided that I needed help too. I needed to be able to share my fears and failures with people who had gone before me. I needed to ask questions and find resources so that I could provide the kind of supportive care my son needed. Unfortunately, there was very little for me.

Once I had done the hard work of getting school support and medical and mental health care for my boy, and after I had learned a ton of information, I took on the task of making sure no other parent had to work that hard to find resources. With the help of Sara, we started the Rainbow Caregivers Network as a way to connect with other parents who might be having the same struggle, and who might need to talk it out with someone who had experienced the same thing. Since June of 2017 we have met some wonderful parents who share our journey. We have held each other up in the hard times, and celebrated successes with each other.

We have been overwhelmed by the support of agencies and individuals who have given us so much.

First, we found Stacey at TransForum Quinte. She took the time to understand our needs and she has been an invaluable resource for our family. Through Stacey we have connected with so many other wonderful people. Without her we might still be floundering! Thank you, Stacey!!

Stacey directed us to the SayOUTloud group in Belleville. It's a peer support group for LGBTQ youth. It has been run for over 20 years by a fellow named Eric Hargreaves. Never in my life, and that is not an understatement, have I met a person so generous of their person as Eric.

He took an amazing amount of time to talk to us about what our needs were, and to make sure we got the support we needed for our son. Eric spends countless hours every week connecting with people from many different generations and backgrounds to ensure a more inclusive culture for everyone. Eric, you have been my rock this year. I am forever indebted to you; I am a better person because of you.

When Sara and I had the idea to form this group we needed a place to meet in. Sandie Sidsworth, Executive Director of CMHA-Hastings and Prince Edward Counties didn't hesitate to make sure we had a place to start. Sandie gave us the tools we needed to found a peer support group, and offered advice on making it work. Without Sandie we would never have existed in the first place, and I am incredibly grateful to have been mentored by such an amazing person.

Next, we met Dr. Andrew Moss and Andy Siddell. Andrew helped us to become more understanding parents and helped our son to be a stronger more resilient person. Andrew, you literally changed our life. Together with Andrew, Andy has been responsible for getting us a new home at the Priory Wellness Center. Andy singlehandedly created our website, and has been a constant source of support for the "day to day" running of this group. Thank you both for your immense generosity and kindness.

Looking back, 2017 was a year of beginnings. Now I'm looking ahead to the new year. When I think of a word to describe my hope for 2018 "PROGRESS" springs to mind. We are going to continue to offer the peer support we were established for, but we're also going to strive to build a strong base of allies for the LGBTQ community in the Quinte area. We're going to continue to provide resources and connections with each other, and build capacity locally. Mostly we're excited to meet you! Please connect with us. You are always welcome!

Jackie Dales, RN, BScN (she/her)