



» WORLD TEACHERS' DAY

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Parents develop close ties

Children with special needs call for patience, compassion and especially communication

LAURA KANE
STAFF REPORTER

Like many proud parents, Anne Marie Kaye cried at her son's high school graduation.

But for Kaye, that pride was tinged with sadness. Her son Evan, 21, had grown too old to be taught by his favourite teacher, Nicole Dixon.

"I cried buckets," she said. "I knew she couldn't have him in her classroom anymore and I wanted her to teach him forever."

Dixon is one of many special education teachers nominated for the 2012 Star Teacher Award. Parents wrote powerful letters to the Star describing the impact of such teachers on their children's lives.

Kaye said the three years Dixon taught her son, at the MukiBaum Treatment Centre in Concord, Ont., were the happiest of his life.

"He'd be at home on weekends, saying, 'Teacher! Bus! School!' He was smiling when he said it. He couldn't wait to go back."

Evan is developmentally delayed, autistic, an insulin-supported diabetic and has mild cerebral palsy. He is essentially non-verbal and must live in a group home on weekdays.

"He's had so many strikes against him in his short life. Most teachers would be overwhelmed," Kaye said.

But Dixon, who has been working in special education for six years, was determined to give Evan more independence.

She and her staff taught him to use the bathroom by himself, no small feat for someone with Evan's disabilities. Then, this year, he enjoyed his first overnight camping trip. He is now in an adult day program.

"Evan has this amazing smile and energy.

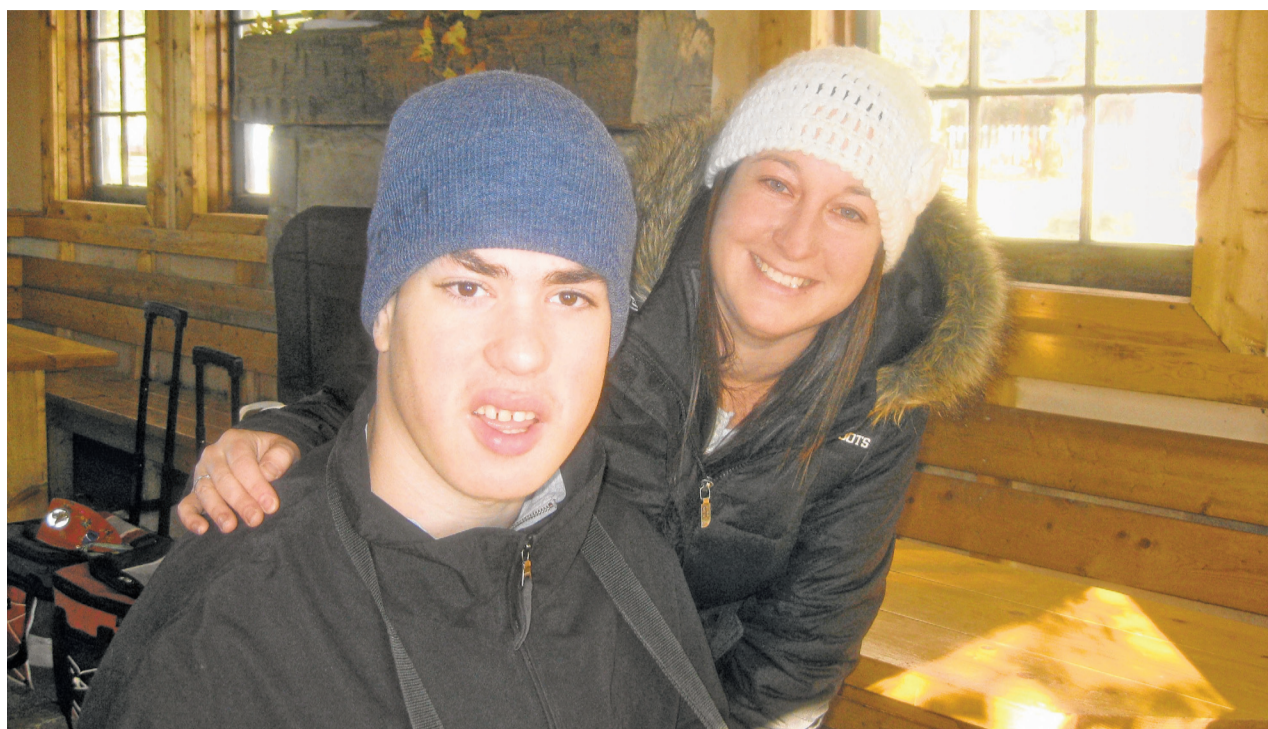


PHOTO COURTESY NICOLE DIXON

He's the kind of student who makes any teacher's job worthwhile," Dixon said.

She said there are three qualities that special education teachers must possess: patience, compassion and, above all, communication skills. She updated Kaye on her son's progress several times a week through email and phone calls.

"To totally understand a student, you have to have a connection with the family," Dixon said. "Parents know their kids best: what triggers them, what motivates them."

The nomination letters that flooded the Star newsroom reveal the close bond many parents forge with special education teachers.

There were too many nominees to be recognized here, but among them are Graham Workman of Cherry Tree Public School, Beth Crew of Silver Pines Public School and Nancy Dye, a teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing with the Toronto District School Board.

Christina Mathura was nominated by four parents for her ISP-autism program at Earl Grey Senior Public School.

Shari Lapena said Mathura completely changed her son Christopher's attitude toward school. The gifted boy was diagnosed with high-functioning autism in Grade 5 but he was bullied and had trouble completing his assignments. He entered Mathura's class in Grade 7 and within a few weeks seemed happier and more motivated. By the end of the year, he had a 90 per cent average.

Nicole Dixon, who has been nominated for a Star Teacher Award, accompanied disabled student Evan Kaye on his first field trip.



The Ontario Principals' Council congratulates teachers on

WORLD TEACHERS' DAY

For making a difference in the lives of kids and the future of our province. We're proud to work with you everyday for a strong public education system.



TORONTO STAR Teacher Award

2012 HONOUR ROLL

Congratulations to the following Ontario certified elementary and secondary teachers who were nominated for the 4th Annual Toronto Star Teacher Award by students, parents and colleagues from across the province.

Christina Ackerman St. Gregory CS/Our Lady of Fatima, Picton
John Adachi George Harvey SS, York
Janna Adair Lambton-Kingsway JMS, Toronto
Theresa Adams Roselawn PS, Richmond Hill
Margaret Allen Edenbrook PS, Brampton
Bill Allen Three Valleys PS, North York
Debra Allison Beaverton PS, Beaverton
Arthur Alloro St. Gregory CS, Picton
Angela Antonopoulos Brisdale PS, Brampton
Frank Arabia Bennington Heights ES, East York
Nancy Atrill Kindree PS, Mississauga
Biagio Aulino Father Bressani CHS, Vaughan
Elizabeth Ballantyne Emily Carr SS, Woodbridge
Emily Bandini Roland Michener PS, Ajax
Craig Barton James S. Bell JMS, Toronto
Peter Beamish St. Joseph's College School, Toronto
Leanne Bellec Weston Memorial JPS, Toronto
Kari Bergerson Avondale Alternative ES, Toronto
Veena Bhatia Macklin PS, Toronto
Amanda Boughtflower Thornlea SS, Thornhill
Ryan Branoff Westminster PS, Vaughan
Shelly Brennan Marc Garneau CI, North York
Susan Brioux St. Joseph ES, Oakville
Pat Buccini York Catholic District School Board
Serena Bufalino Thistleton Regional Centre, King
Lindsay Butsan Brookside PS, Scarborough
Casey Cabral Divine Mercy CES, Vaughan
Toni Cadieux Queenston Drive PS, Mississauga
Jane Cameron Goldcrest PS, Brampton
Jacqueline Cane Knob Hill PS, Scarborough
Mira Carniol Eastern Commerce CI, Toronto
Joel Caslick Belle River District High School, Belle River
Vicki Caume Courtice North PS, Clarington
Chihymn Chan East York CI, Toronto
Dale Cimolai St. Nicholas CES, Newmarket
Olga Cioci Blue Willow PS, Woodbridge
Elizabeth Clarke Meadowvale PS, Scarborough
Margaret Clay-Thorne St. Peter ES, Milton
Sally Cohen Louis-Honoré Fréchette PS, Thornhill
Katie Coombs Lord Lansdowne PS, Toronto
Sean Corozo Central Peel SS, Brampton
Adam Cox Emily Carr SS, Woodbridge
Beth Crew Silver Pines PS, Richmond Hill
Tatyana Dachuck Father Frederick McGinn CES, Richmond Hill
Deb Daly Dunbarton High School, Pickering
Stan Dankey Sir William Mulock SS, Newmarket
Celeste De Almeida Bishop Marrocco/Thomas Merton CSS, Toronto
Jocelyne Desjardins Academie Catholique Mere-teresa, Hamilton
Gurnam Dhillon Lincoln M. Alexander SS, Mississauga
Angela Di Tommaso St. Augustine CS, Downsview
Frumie Diamond Dewson Street JPS, Toronto
Joseph DiFonzo Ossington/Old Orchard PS, Toronto
Nicole Dixon Westminster PS, Vaughan
Melissa Dockery Homelands Senior PS, Mississauga
Wendy Donaldson Sir Isaac Brock PS, Guelph
Peter Donatelli Rivercrest JS, Toronto
Ellen Douglas Fern Avenue PS, Toronto
Marie-Claude Douville Rosethorn JS, Etobicoke
Nancy Dye TDSB - Hearing Itinerant Dept., Toronto
Donald Eckler Clinton Street JPS, Toronto

Thomas Eschle Richmond Hill High School, Richmond Hill
Pamela Feldberg German Mills PS, Markham
Lorian Feres-Cortina Iona CSS, Mississauga
Tamiko Ferguson Queen Elizabeth CVI, Kingston
Daniel Ferguson Withrow PS, Toronto
Micheal FitzPatrick St. Thomas More SS, Mississauga
Shawn Gauthier Oriole Park JPS, Toronto
Daniel Gerech York Memorial CI, Toronto
Jan Golden Trillium Woods ES, Barrie
Henry Gomez Cedarbrae CI, Scarborough
Jennifer Goodine Pickering High School, Ajax
Mike Gordon J.S. Woodsworth PS, Toronto
Will Gourley Sam Chapman PS, Markham
Alexandra Grant Sir Adam Beck JS, Etobicoke
Linda Gutteridge J.S. Woodsworth PS, Toronto
Carine Hamilton Edward T. Crowley PS, Markham
Diedre Hendry Dorset Drive PS, Brampton
Chapmann Hodd St. Jerome CES, Aurora
Susan Holman Pringle Creek PS, Whitby
Kevin Hrychuck Beryl Ford PS, Brampton
Sarah Jacinto Bloorlea MS, Toronto
Jasmine Jackman Judith Nyman SS, Brampton
Edmund Jackson Randall PS, Markham
Ashley Jeffrey Emily Carr SS, Woodbridge
Darlene Jones Brookview MS, Toronto
Troy Jones Milne Valley MS, Toronto
Tiuu Kajak Earl Haig PS, Toronto
Mary Ketrlick Roland Michener PS, Ajax
Leyla Kfoury Thorncliffe Park PS, East York
Jon Kirby Erindale SS, Mississauga
Lisa Koenigsberger Canadian Martyrs CES, Newmarket
Cara Lambert Bellmere JPS, Toronto
T Lamont Ellwood Memorial PS, Caledon
Karen Lapprand Hillcrest PS, Mississauga
Jamie Launder Thomas Street MS, Mississauga
Craig Lawler Windfields JHS, North York
Sarah Leaney Pickering High School, Ajax
Kevin Lin Don Mills CI, North York
Kenneth Liska Sir William Mulock SS, Newmarket
Vincent Lu Don Mills CI, North York
Jill Maar Armadale PS, Markham
Elizabeth Magee CAP Bridges Alt. Atten. School, Toronto
Jessica Mallam J.S. Woodsworth PS, Toronto
Aristotelly Mantziouras William Lyon Mackenzie CI, Toronto
Katherine Marchello Brampton Centennial SS, Brampton
Alexandra Maric-Jones Jackman Avenue PS, Toronto
Phillip Martin Shepperd PS, Kitchener
Lisa Mast Bloorview School Authority, Toronto
Scott Masters Crestwood Preparatory College, Toronto
Christina Mathura Earl Grey Senior PS, Toronto
Jessica Matt Penetanguishene Learning Centre
Thomas Maunder L'Amoreaux CI, Toronto
Lesley McGougan St. Rita CES, Brampton
Ted McNiece Clinton Street JPS, Toronto
Dennis McWhinney Judith Nyman SS, Brampton
Aaloka Mehendiratta Dunrankin Drive PS, Mississauga
Patti Mihalides St. Andrew ES, Oakville
Jon Alexander Milette Maple Creek PS, Maple
Kristen Miller Aloma Crescent PS, Brampton
Jennifer Muir-Birtles Mount Albert PS, East Gwillimbury

Nicole Nayman TDSB In Home Services
Ashley Neill Southwood Park PS, Ajax
Allana Osher Northlea Elementary & MS, Toronto
David Page Assumption College CHS, Windsor
Lena Pang Ellen Fairclough PS, Markham
Barbara Parker F.H. Miller JPS
Laurie Payne Britt PS, Britt
M Peluso St. John Vianney CES, Windsor
Tara Persad Guardian Angels CES, Milton
Kari Peters Sir Robert L. Borden BTI, Scarborough
Robin Phillips Lawrence Heights MS, Toronto
George Placewicz St. Robert CHS, Thornhill
Kevin Polidano Father Leo J. Austin Catholic SS, Whitby
Katie Prentice Penetanguishene SS, Penetanguishene
Gizelle Price Holy Name of Mary CSS, Mississauga
Lisa Ramey R.H. McGregor PS, Toronto
Jean Rehder Nelson Mandela Park PS & Regent Park/Duke of York PS, Toronto
Graham Richards St. Mary CSS, Cobourg
Barbara Robson Northlea Elementary & MS, Toronto
Marino Rocca Michael Power/St. Joseph Catholic SS, Toronto
Lorie Rogers Silvercreek PS, Halton Hills
Ms. Roti-Nardi Jarvis CI, Toronto
Jane Ryan Sir Albert Love CS, Oshawa
Richard Schweitzer Hillcrest Private School, Orangeville
Suriel Shah McKinnon PS, Mississauga
Julie Sheppard Ajax High School, Ajax
Leslie Simon Silver Pines PS, Richmond Hill
Sarojnee Singh Shelter Bay PS, Mississauga
Mark Siolek Monsignor Percy Johnson CHS, Toronto
Mollie Sitwell Durham Christian Academy, Courtice
Amy Smith Redstone PS, Mississauga
Mark Spencer Collingwood CI, Collingwood
Nancy Stegweit Shelter Bay PS, Mississauga
Micheal Stewart Sir John A. Macdonald CI, Toronto
Chris Stidham Father John Redmond CSS, Etobicoke
Mark Stoddart Redstone PS, Richmond Hill
George Strobopolous Emily Carr SS, Woodbridge
Marie Sullivan Don Mills CI, North York
Catherine Sullivan St. Cecilia CES, Maple
Emily Summers J.S. Woodsworth PS, Toronto
Kirk Swain Roland Michener PS, Ajax
Toni Taves Cashmere Avenue PS, Mississauga
Karen Thompson Monarch Park CI, Toronto
Dave Treherne Finch PS, Toronto
Christopher Uchida Emily Carr SS, Woodbridge
Michelle Van Herk Jesse Ketchum PS, Toronto
Mr. VanLangenberg St. Justin Martyr CES, Markham
Tonya Vokey-Young Aurora Grove PS, Aurora
Nancy Westwood Russell D. Barber PS, Brampton
Steven Whiler Markville SS, Markham
Allison Williams Ballantrae PS, Whitchurch-Stouffville
Jermayne Williams Bliss Carman JPS, Toronto
Patrick Williams R.J. Lang Elementary & MS, North York
Carlos Wong Father Michael Goetz SS, Mississauga
Graham Workman Cherry Tree PS, Brampton
Jesse Yarema Milne Valley MS, Toronto
Anthony Zomparelli St. Anthony CS, Toronto
Entire Teaching Staff John English JMS, Toronto