



Warming Hearts Across The Distance

"We're planning to move to Nanaimo." As the words left Scott's mouth I could feel my heart sink. Scott has been a valuable resource in my son Josh's life for the past three years. Scott is one of those amazing caregivers who bring both skill and heart to the job. Whenever Scott was scheduled to be on shift, Josh would eagerly wait for his arrival. Sometimes Josh would sit by the front window – not caring that Scott wasn't scheduled to arrive for another 3 hours. Other times Josh would grab me by the hand and insist on walking to the end of the block to see if he could see Scott's vehicle turning onto our street.



And so when Scott declared his intention to move his family a ferry ride away, the news was greeted with a mixture of emotions. Joy at the opportunity for Scott and his family, and sadness at the loss of his valuable relationship with Josh. But Scott had more that he wanted to say. It was his next sentence that moved me to tears. "We'd like to have Josh come live with us."

A few years ago it was a forlorn dream that my son might live in a home with others who cared for him as deeply as his mother and I. But over time I began to experience the reserve of caring that exists in our community and the deep desire of people to participate in my son's life. I began to trust that others do care for Josh; they simply need information and an opportunity to express their care. Now the dream of Josh living with others who love him deeply is a reality.

While this change in my son's life is a necessary part of his maturing, I have to admit it is not easy for his mother and I to have him so far away from us. While the distance as measured in kilometers is not great, the psychological distance feels tremendous.

Recently we signed up for a Tyze network. In truth the Tyze network is not for Josh. He has very little understanding of the written word, much less computers, websites, and networks. What Tyze does is keep a myriad of people who love and care about Josh – myself, his mother, his siblings, his grandparents, friends, and even former caregivers – connected to him and active in his life.

Though Josh can't send us a message, his current caregivers regularly make Tyze postings as if it were Josh speaking. When I open my email and discover a message from Josh that says: "Hi Dad, I'm looking forward to your visit," or "I had a great day today," my heart opens. While my head knows Josh didn't write the posting, my heart receives the message fully.

To read about Josh's day and see pictures of him swimming at the local pool, walking the beach, or celebrating a birthday fills me with joy. Tyze has shrunk the distance between my son and I and helped to strengthen a network of loved ones who are so important to securing Josh's future.