

# Becoming a Young Adult

*by Lois and Mike Ross*



**Emily Ross**

As many of you already know well first hand, raising a child with special needs has many, many facets. Our daughter, Emily, is now 22 years old and has blossomed into a lovely, engaging and independent young woman. This young woman can navigate the bus and c-train transit system better than anyone else in our household and this awesome skill reaffirms for us that teaching her to be as independent as possible was worth all the worry that came with it! She enjoys many friends and is constantly seeking to balance her budget with the many expectations that come with friends, malls, boyfriends and so on. Emily's presence in the household has brought with it many interesting, joyful, worrisome, thought-provoking and live-changing moments for all of us.

An opportunity that has allowed Emily to develop friendships and independence is her participation in Special Olympics. This amazing organization has allowed Emily to travel to places such as Quebec City, Edmonton and participate in the Special Olympic World Games in Shanghai, China.

Emily attended an extra year of high school in a Work Study program to gain a bit more time to learn some basic life skills. She then attended a local college and was part of a course entitled the Transitional Vocational Program. This program allowed Emily to work with a support worker and other teachers who taught life and work skills, and sought out job placements for her. As a result, Emily worked for a few years at a seniors' residence serving food and

learning first hand the culture of work "out there in the real world".

Although Emily is currently seeking other employment (her choice), she has gained a sense of responsibility and wishes to move out on her own. Several of her friends live with a "supportive room mate" and this is a possibility for Emily, as well. However, we are also considering investing in a condo or townhouse for our daughter, as she has many of the skills required to live on her own. We believe that she would need and benefit from a room mate in this situation as well, and know that the right person will come along.

Although we obviously have not developed a firm plan on how the transition will look in its entirety for Emily when she moves out on her own, I firmly believe that she will be as prepared as possible from all the preparation and hard-work we all have put into her future!