

**Self-Advocates Present
at
Community Living Ontario Conference**

A group of us headed off to Kingston for the Community Living Ontario Conference from June 3-5, 2009. We all went to take part in the sessions but some of us were there to work. Gary Kusch, Diane Jones, and Debbie Cavers were giving a presentation at the conference. The group's presentation was called "Inspiring Your Voices to Make Change". About 50 people attended our session and lots of people asked for copies of our materials. We talked about how to give people who receive services a voice in hiring procedures. Also, we talked about how as a self-advocate's group you can go about changing your agency's complaint policy and procedures. We hoped we inspired a lot of people to go back and make changes in their community.

We had a good time in Kingston. The group stayed at the Ambassador Hotel which we loved. It was nice and quiet. We had a chance to hit the pool and hot tub which was fun. On the Thursday night we attended the gala celebration at Fort Henry which was awesome. We had a good dinner served in a tent outside. There was a bagpiper there playing music. After dinner there was a dance which Sherry loved but Gary was ready to go home. Sherry convinced him to stay and at the end of the evening everyone enjoyed the fireworks.

We went to many different sessions at the conference. We learned a lot of interesting things and we brought many great ideas back to our REACH Out Committee. Some of us had the chance to see some of the films from the Sprout Film Festival. On opening night we heard a really good mother and daughter duo sing for us. What was cool about them is that the daughter has autism. On the last day of the conference, they showed the Freedom Tour movie. This movie was done by People First Canada to raise awareness to the fact that many people who have an intellectual disability still live in institutions across Canada. Everyone at the conference though was celebrating the closure of Ontario's institutions. We met lots of new friends and hope to see them again soon. It was an experience of a life time!

We wanted to say a big thank you to Denise Tanguay for taking us to the conference. She helped us go to sessions, was our cheerleader at our presentation and took pictures of everything we did. Everywhere we went all we heard was the "click, click, click" of Denise's camera. She did everything! Attending conferences in the future won't be the same without you. Thank you Denise for helping us and we will all miss you.

Gary and Sherry Kusch
Bruce and Diane Jones

