

ABLE Network embodies 'refuse to settle' philosophy



By Brock Weir

Able Network wants its members to reach their full potential and be the best they can be.

In short, the Aurora-based organization which provides education and opportunities for those living with intellectual challenges, not only refuses to settle for less with their young men and women, but they also refuse to settle for less as an organization.

This philosophy recently caught the eye of the local Pita Pit store as the company embarked on their nation-wide 'Refuse to Settle' campaign, which sees Pita Pit franchisees nominate organizations in their community who live by this philosophy every day.

'Pita Pit Canada is very big on the core values of having each other's backs and being fanatical about what you do, being fresh all the time,' says Natasha Both, franchisee of the Bayview Avenue restaurant. 'We're always fresh with our food, but also always fresh with our thinking. I felt Able Network was very much aligned with those core values and that is why I nominated them for the Refuse to Settle campaign.'

As a result, Natasha welcomed two Able Network volunteers to the store last week to formally present a \$1,000 cheque, a much-appreciated boost for the grassroots organization.

'One of my employees sons is part of Able Network and she talks about how involved they are with him, how every year they make sure he is in the right environment for what he needs and what he is capable of doing and how he can contribute to the community,' says Natasha. 'They review where his strengths and weaknesses are and how they can situate him to improve himself in just everyday life skills.'

'Able Network didn't know about the Refuse to Settle campaign that was going on for 2018, but I met [Director] Barb Allan at a Chamber of Commerce event and it just clicked. I knew that that was it.'

That same click was felt by Ms Allan.

'We all want to be valued, busy, and reach our full potential,' she says. 'It is nice that they thought of us and honoured us this way. It is nice that they thought of the Able Network in the context of the Refuse to Settle campaign, showing that we're not going to settle and we want our guys to be the best they can be and reach their full potential. Ever since Pita Pit moved into Aurora, they have been a good champion for us.'

'We are a community organization and everything we do is a natural job in a community setting. We don't have a lot of expenses in regards to things or 'stuff' because we spend all our time out in the community. The biggest reason we fundraise and accept donations is because we're trying to continue Able. We're a fee for service organization and we're trying to continue to be an affordable organization. Our biggest cost is staffing and having our staff support people in the community.'

More than half of their operating budget, she says, is met through fundraising, with the balance recouped through fees from families coming to Able Network. Every little bit helps, says Ms. Allan.

Last week cheque presentation afforded two Able Network members 'Elaine and Michael' with one more opportunity to learn a very important skill: Ms. Both and Pita Pit employee Jennifer McPhee taught them step by step how to assemble the perfect pita, which they were able to bring back for lunch at Able Network's home base, The Rectory at Trinity Anglican Church.

'They really enjoyed it and it was a highlight for sure,' said Ms. Allan of the hands-on experience.

Adds Natasha: 'They had such a blast being a part of it. Elaine called her mum and told her, 'You've got to sit down. I've got news for you.' She was just so thrilled to have a pita she made.'