

## Canada's Chief Play Officer hangs up Xbox controls



**By Brock Weir**

She didn't wanna to grow up?after all, she's a Toys R Us kid ? but for Aurora's Julianne Bisnaire, all good things must come to an end.

Julianne, formerly a student at ESC Renaissance, was appointed nearly two years ago as Toys R Us' Chief Play officer. Thrilled with her appointment, being Chief Play Officer (CPO) gave her first crack at and a sneak preview of all the new toys the national toy retailer would have to offer in upcoming seasons. Given the chance to try them all out herself, she was able to then travel the country, appearing on national and local television and radio, to speak about the toys themselves and ? especially helpful to parents ? what teens, tweens, and kids really wanted.

?When I started as Chief Play Officer, I didn't really know what to expect,? Julianne told The Auroran last week as her term came to a close. ?I was kind of afraid, but once I got started with everybody and travelled a bit, I loved it from the very beginning. I think it was a really great experience for me, so much fun, and I really enjoyed it. There were so many cool experiences.?

Cool experiences came around fairly often, but many of these experiences will likely prove to be truly unforgettable. Throughout her term, the ?CPO? got to record videos and interact with Canada's Olympic heroes, hosted events like a special launch party for Xbox 360, walk in the Santa Claus Parade in Toronto, and, of course, receive more toys than she ever dreamed of.

?All the toys are amazing,? she said. ?I had a lot of fun with them, but if I had to pick a favourite, I would have to pick Xbox360. It gets the family involved, you are up on your feet, and you are the controller, so it is not just sitting there playing a video game.?

Receiving a new shipment of toys every month might be daunting even for the most ardent of toy and video game fans, but Julianne took everything in her stride. While she studied at ESC Renaissance, she recently shifted direction into the arts, redirecting her studies to Thornhill's St. Elizabeth Catholic High School. While on the road promoting the toys, if it infringed on her studies, Toys R Us provided her with a tutor to keep up, while the crew provided lots of laughs along the way.

?When I first heard about the job, I thought it would be really cool to be able to play with toys and being on TV all the time. It was beyond my expectations. It was so much more than I thought it would be ? in a good way.

?I knew I would be talking about toys, but I think the most fun part for me was working with a lot of the fun people and just being at the various events.?

Julianne snagged the CPO post in an unusual way. She submitted, as all applicants did, a video for consideration, but rather than

explain why she would be the right girl for the job, she sent in a spoof of how 'ridiculous' the position was from the perspective of a pompous business tycoon.

She tried to make it as 'different' as possible to stand out from the crowd and evidently that did the trick.?

As she turns 15 this November, Julianne says she and Toys R Us came to the mutual decision it was time to pass the torch to someone younger. From a personal perspective, as she has aged through the program, her own interests have shifted slightly away from toys ? and more towards the arts at St. Elizabeth, where she is studying their vocal program and while she has had a slight change of interests she says her interest in toys remains as healthy as ever.

As her term wraps up, and hopefuls wait to see if their videos also capture Toys R Us brass' imaginations, she passes on advice received from her immediate predecessor.

'Love every second of it and enjoy the moment,' she said. 'A year goes by pretty fast. Like Daniel Wilson, the previous CPO said to me, it is an amazing experience. Just love every second of it.'