

Rapper breaks down barriers with autism awareness message



By Brock Weir

As time has come and time has gone, sometimes your only wish is to fit in or belong, says Brad Yanneff.

Sometimes it is just not as simple as turning that frown upside down.

That is the message Mr. Yanneff brought to the Town Park Band Shell this month. A residential support worker with the Aurora-based Kerry's Place Autism Services by day and a rapper? well, by day too as well as night, the artist formally known as B_Yze got the crowd up on their feet with his message of hope for people living on the Autism Spectrum.

?I deal with many different individuals with autism and different behaviours and that sort of thing, and that is part of where I got my inspiration from,? says Yanneff of his song, which he performed at the annual Kerry's Place Volunteer Appreciation Day, held in conjunction with Art in the Park and the Aurora Farmers' Market. ?I was coming up to an evaluation and was having a hard time trying to remember the definition of autism and a friend of mine suggested I write a song since I have been writing music for over five years now. Then, it ended up being a bigger project than I intended and now I'm trying to educate and show awareness.?

Since he completed the song, he put his time and money into creating a video, which has since become something of a hit on YouTube, helping break down barriers and inspire others living on the spectrum. Recently, he had the opportunity to show the video at a conference centred on addressing these issues and it was there the value of his message was truly brought home.

?I got off stage and someone came up to me in tears to give me a hug,? he recalls. ?He was non-verbal, so that was really awesome. Working with Kerry's Place, I enjoy the opportunity to work with others. It is just something I fell into, but it just fits.?

Kerry's Place too is the perfect fit for Aurora. The organization, which recently celebrated its 41st anniversary, takes over the park for one Saturday each July as a way to give back to their volunteers and members. But, it is also a way for others to pay tribute to the services Kerry's Place provides to the community.

?Yesterday, I had the opportunity to have a conversation with a friend of mine who had to be hospitalized recently, and she has to care for her grandson who has been diagnosed with autism,? said Newmarket-Aurora MP Lois Brown. ?She is going through some terrible struggles in trying to get assistance and I spoke with her for a while o how we can help and how she can reach out to people in our community who would be available to her.

?How we care for the people around us speaks volumes about the way we deal with people around us and what our reputation is first and foremost as Canadians.?