

Williams crowns prom King and Queen in landslide vote



By Brock Weir

Prom is a magical time for any student, but the graduating class of Dr. G.W. Williams made some magic of their own last Thursday, voting in a landslide to crown Steven Burfield and Candice Dawson their King and Queen.

Candice and Steven, who both live with Down Syndrome, were overjoyed when their names were announced, after their fellow students went table to table to make their coronation pitch.

"It was good, I really enjoyed it!" says Steven, still proudly wearing his crown alongside Candice upon request, of course at the high school on Monday afternoon. "I was happy when they put the crown on."

This happiness was shared not only by the rest of the 2012 graduating class, but by their parents as well.

Although the decision on who to appoint their Prom King and Queen rested solely with the students, perhaps fate played a hand in it as well.

As prom approached, Candice's excitement for the festivities hit fever pitch and in the lead-up she took matters into her own hands and asked Steven to be her date. Having grown up together since the age of five, he happily accepted. The duo crossed paths many times before they arrived at Dr. G.W. Williams, participating in shared programs, and also spending a great deal of their elementary school education at Highview Public School.

"We were actually surprised to see Steven was coming here but we thought it was great because he is such a nice boy and he's a lot of fun."

And how! After being crowned, King Steven led a conga line through prom and, when the music changed, led the crowd in a round of break dancing without missing a beat.

But happiness hit a whole different level once their respective parents heard about the prom vote, expressing their emotions through social media which subsequently went viral through many channels.

?I was in absolute shock,? says Karen, Candice's mother. ?It was wonderful and it says a lot about the kids around here. My husband and I are just shaking our heads here. Candice has been going on about prom for months and months. We came from such a wonderful school (Highview) that was so inclusive to begin with, they were wonderful there, but when we walked into Williams I was a little frightened that we would see a difference. But, we didn't. It is wonderful.?

Steven and Candice participate in the Best Buddies program, which provides student-to-student mentorship for scholars with special needs. Their Best Buddies invited them to attend their pre-Prom party, their cruise in the limo, and to sit at their table at prom.

?It is hard to put into one sentence what the Best Buddies program means because they do so much,? says Karen. ?You have to be there to see what it is like and it makes them feel like they are just as much a part of the community and the school as everyone else. It means a lot to our kids, but for the kids who get involved it does a lot for them too because it makes them more aware and it makes everything more accessible.?