

The Miracle that Changed my Life

The Kids, Cops and Computers program helps kids in at-risk communities with their academic career by providing these students with new computers, printers, software and high-speed internet. Created by the Merry Go Round Foundation, this program offers many opportunities for a student to make friends with a police officer, to make new friends at school, to achieve their goals and to learn many valuable skills. I have greatly benefitted from this program – it is helping me get through school every single step of the way.

My family was experiencing financial difficulties and was having trouble keeping up with society. Assignments in school required me to research extensively on topics I was not familiar with. My family owned a 1998 Dell computer and we could not afford paying for the internet service. I would have to ask a classmate to research for me or I would spend a few hours at the library near my school. It was becoming a continuous struggle to keep up in class.

My principal introduced the program to students in my school one day when I was in grade 7. I became interested in this program immediately and I knew this program would help me get through school. I filled out the survey to the best of my knowledge and abilities and I got my parents to help me with it. I handed the survey in the next day – that commenced a period of anxious waiting. You can guess how excited I was when I got a letter saying that the program accepted me. The kick-off began at the basement of the church next door during recess. Nine other students and I met with a few police officers, ate some pizza and information about our computer and set up was given to us.

After a week or so, I came home from school to find a brand new HP computer sitting at a desk in my parent's room. Before that time, I did not know that computers with a monitor stacked on top existed. I was amazed and I was convincing myself that this was not a dream. I considered this as a true miracle in my life. I could not believe that there was a man out there who had grown in a situation similar to mine, became successful and is giving back to the community to help those like him.

With the internet was activated, school became so much easier for me. I could conduct research for my assignments and I would not have to go to the library. I became a high-achiever and ended up getting great marks in my subjects. With the internet, I started to have some extra time on my hands.

During the rest of my grade 7 year and throughout my grade 8 year at my elementary school, I participated in the Cross Country competition and a softball

tournament with my school team. I began to develop a sense of confidence within me. And guess what? I ended up winning 1st place for Intermediate Public Speaking that year! I worked quite hard that year and all my hard work paid off in the end. At my grade 8 graduation ceremony, I was presented with the Valedictorian Award, the French Award, the Italian Award, the Christian Citizenship Award, the Science Award and I was also on the Honour Roll. I realized that I have become a high-achiever and I was overjoyed to see the proud faces of my family. I'll never forget that my mother never stopped smiling – I had never seen that proud, happy smile before.

The end of the year also brought the Merry Go Round End of the Year Celebration. I was asked to speak to the audience about how Merry Go Round has made a difference in my life. I was honoured to speak in front of everyone – especially since we were occupying the Chamber of Commerce at Toronto's City Hall. I never thought I would meet a celebrity before. However, I ended up meeting Farelly Flex (Canadian Idol Judge); I did not know that he was a sponsor for Merry Go Round but I was still overjoyed at meeting him.

The celebration concluded with awards given out to all students and students who were recognized for their hard work. I would have never guessed that I would have received the Tamara-Bahr Patterson Award for Excellence. That award gave me a new Sansa MP3 player (something secretly on my wish list) and a scholarship that would grow along with me. I cannot describe how glad I was to know that I would be helping my parents pay for my future education. I could see the proud look of satisfaction in my parent's eyes. I could tell that they knew they raised me well.

I was not sure what to expect when I began high school. However, I found out that my teachers expected me to create various types of projects and assignments. I would have to do everything from videos, PowerPoint presentations, essays and other Word documents. Merry Go Round has blessed me with everything that I needed to get great marks and fulfill what was expected of me. Without Merry Go Round and their sponsors, I do not know how I would get all of these assignments finished.

At the beginning of 2010, a church Youth Group elected me to be the assistant leader. My duties were to help the secretary and the leader; however, my most important duty included planning and carrying out monthly performances. I searched for songs and the proper way to play them on the computer. I was also able to communicate with the members of the group through MSN or Facebook. The internet, the software lessons and the computer have been an essential part of my contribution to that youth group. I would create PowerPoint presentations, various Word documents and even Excel spreadsheets. I was familiar with this software because of the previous training that Merry Go Round has provided me with.

Today, I still actively use my computer, printer and software – I would not be where I am today without it. I am continuing my great academic marks and I am a part of a few clubs at my school. I am running for Student Council and Microsoft Office Publisher helped me create my campaign posters. I can never stop saying how useful the computer is to me. Hopefully, I'll make it into the council.

I have taught and am still teaching my sisters and my mother everything I know about computers. Today's society is constantly advancing in technology. Without Merry Go Round, I would be left behind. I believe that every child should be able to learn everything that I have. This knowledge will greatly help them in the future.

To those present Merry Go Round participants out there, I want you to know that Merry Go Round will be there for you just as they have been there for me. Don't take this opportunity for granted. This is a rare opportunity that most people may not experience. So I ask that you reach out to your fellow classmates and help them as much as you can. Just as Merry Go Round has made a difference in your life, you will do the same for others.

I thank Merry Go Round and their sponsors for the wonderful opportunity they have provided me with. I would not be where I am without them. With Merry Go Round, I have grown in self-confidence, in knowledge, and in character. My entire family has benefitted greatly from the Kids, Cops, and Computers program. From the bottom of our hearts, we sincerely thank you for the work you have done and are still doing for those children in at-risk communities.

Yours Sincerely,

Joshua D.