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MEDIA RELEASE

Autistic Adults Staying Connected in Durham Region

Bowmanville, ON (December 15, 2020) – Making friends and discovering new interests has been tough in 2020. For people with autism, those challenges are nothing new.

Autism Home Base is a charity that helps autistic adults create and maintain supportive connections. And thanks to receiving a \$46,000 Seed grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation in 2019, the “Pal Project” was initiated.

“It is wonderful that Autism Home Base Durham was able to use this Ontario Trillium Foundation grant to combat social isolation and provide valuable connections for adults with autism during the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Lindsey Park, Member of Provincial Parliament for Durham.

The project was designed to expand their peer circles by inviting Pals, community volunteers, to pair with members at regular meet ups.

“We would handle the friendship ‘logistics’ that can be a barrier to socializing for people on the spectrum,” says Judy Hanson, Founder and CEO.

Over the year, Trent University researchers followed the project to study the impact on social networks and support systems for the autistic adults and their families as well. In mid-March the pilot was interrupted. However the COVID-related restrictions presented a unique opportunity to study the impact of virtual friendships during an unprecedented backdrop of social isolation.

“Many volunteers were experiencing a level of social isolation that is our participants’ lifelong reality,” said Hanson.

Members and volunteers reported an interest in staying in touch post-program. The Pal program improved participant well-being and reduced negative feelings associated with isolation.

Autism Home Base Durham is open to new members and volunteers. Interested readers are invited to call 289-278-3489 or visit the website www.autismhomebase.com or find them on social media @autismhomebase for more details.

The Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) is an agency of the Government of Ontario, and one of Canada’s leading granting foundations. OTF awarded \$115 million to 644 projects last year to build healthy and vibrant communities in Ontario. www.otf.ca

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Autism Home Base Durham Inc.

- a social club for adults with autism and people who love them

www.autismhomebase.com