

# Making a difference

*EA discovers personal rewards of providing support*



*Educational Assistant Melissa Parent, right, spends some quality time with Suma. She says working with Family Respite Services as a direct support provider has changed her outlook on life.*

(Windsor, Ontario, Thursday, Sept. 28, 2017) – Melissa Parent began working with Family Respite Services because she wanted to help children with disabilities have more meaningful lives. She never knew how much the experience would help her too.

“Being a direct support provider has been an awesome experience that I plan to continue throughout my life,” said the supply educational assistant.

Family Respite Services is a local organization that works with families who have children with disabilities. Many of those families require support because of the extra demands they face as parents. FRS coordinates short breaks for them by pairing up their children with caregivers,

which provides the parents a chance to take care of other tasks, while providing their child with an opportunity to participate in community activities and make new friends.

Suma and Melissa make regular visits to the park, library, riverfront and other cool places in the city. They also work on social skills through play based activities, and engage in activities where Suma can make new friends.

Besides the personal reward she gets from helping a young child develop, Parent says the experience has helped her grow as a person. Professionally, she has been able to use on-the-spot problem solving skills she has developed through her relationship with Suma, a little girl she was matched up with when she first started working with Family Respite Services five years ago.

“I am in awe of how much Suma has changed over the years,” says Parent. “She has made so many gains in all aspects of life. When I first started working with her she had limited ways to express herself. With a lot of determination and tools that I have learned from school, we have worked on ways in which she can seek out a conversation and express her thoughts, feelings, her likes and dislikes.”

A graduate of the University of Windsor, Parent says she feels that her role with FRS is helping her make a positive difference in her community, and that it has made her the person she is today. Working with Suma has changed her whole outlook on life and now she wants to motivate other like-minded individuals to get involved too.

“I treasure my time with Suma and I encourage everyone to have this opportunity,” she said. “The children are counting on us.”

Anyone who’s is interested can connect with Family Respite Services by e-mailing [info@familyrespite.org](mailto:info@familyrespite.org) or calling 519-972-9688 x 156.