**Transcript - Kim and Shannon Interview**

00:01 Kim: So I’m Kim Flinn, Shannon’s Mom.

00:04 Kim: Shannon grew up with an older sister Laura who’s three years older and her dad Tim and as a child Shannon was very determined and strong willed and stubborn at times which I think put her in good stead.

00:21 Kim: Because I think she needed some of those skills. She also had a real love of life very enthusiastic.

00:28 Kim: When Shannon was born before we left the hospital we knew that Shannon was blind. We didn’t figure out that she was hearing impaired until probably the end of her first year.

00:41 Kim: I was changing her and I dropped something and it made a loud bang and Shannon didn’t startle. So I thought that was kind of odd so I kept dropping it and she didn’t startle. So that got us moving in the direction of checking her hearing and we found out that she was hearing impaired.

00:58 Kim: We didn’t know until she was probably about three. We’d had an MRI and as a result of the MRI we discovered there was an absent cochlea in the right ear which means you’re profoundly deaf there’s no hearing.

01:11 Kim: So she had a mild loss on the left side but a profound loss on the right side. So when she was about, you know a year we started to figure out there was a problem with hearing as well.

01:21 Kim: We found out about DeafBlind Ontario Services when I think Shannon was probably about nine or ten and I believe it was from another agency that was involved with Shannon.

01:30 Kim: We were starting to think about Shannon graduating from high school even though she was only nine or ten, we knew that we needed to plan ahead.

01:39 Kim: So by the time Shannon was around thirteen, fourteen we started to make contact with the agency started to meet people. We went and toured some of the group homes…

01:49 Shannon: Brantford.

01:51 Kim: … One in Brantford, that’s right we did go to one in Brantford and met the staff and talked about their philosophy and how they support their clients and it was one that mostly closely aligned with how we as a family felt. So it seemed at the outset it might be a good fit for Shannon.

02:07 Kim: I was really encouraged to hear that it was an organization that was founded by parents because usually parent driven organizations are the ones that can best meet needs.

02:17 Kim: So I was pretty impressed with that because I had been involved with some other organizations where we had as parent groups done some advocacy work…

02:25 Kim: I think was actually even relieved to find that there was such an agency out there that could potentially support Shannon when she was finished school.

02:33 Kim: DeafBlind Ontario Services is probably the central focus, it is the central focus in Shannon’s life. And without their support I can’t imagine how different not only Shannon’s life but her family’s lives would look. So they are crucial.

02:50 Kim: So Shannon having intervenor services is also very important and I think it’s crucial too because it helps Shannon…

02:59 Shannon: Dedicated to my life.

03:01 Kim: Yeah. That’s right. That’s a good way to say it. So they’re kind of dedicated to supporting you in your day to day activities, aren’t they? That’s right.

03:11 Kim: And so they’re there to help Shannon bridge the communication gap that can cause such frustration and sometimes anger.

03:17 Kim: They’re also there that they can pick up on all those cues, the non-verbal cues and the verbal cues that Shannon gives so that they can help support her and kind of mitigate some of the behaviours that we might experience if she didn’t have someone there to help with her communication needs.

03:36 Kim: So they’re very, very important. They’re like Shannon, they’re an extension of Shannon.

03:42 Kim: DeafBlind Ontario Services has made such a huge difference in our lives and Shannon’s life. I can’t imagine what our lives would look like without DeafBlind Ontario Services and I don’t think we would have all of the success that we’ve had with their great support and their expertise.

04:02 Kim: Because you know we model what they do. So they teach us all the time on how to handle Shannon, how best to support Shannon. They support us when we go to medical appointments. When Shannon was in the hospital recently and was hospitalized for a couple of weeks they were so much support. They were right in there with the family, making sure that Shannon’s needs were met.

04:27 Kim: So not only do they support Shannon, they help us to support Shannon. They’ve made such a huge difference and our whole extended family benefits from the support that they’ve given Shannon.

04:42 Kim: They’re very involved in family events even where they bring Shannon to weddings and showers so they’re kind of part of our extended family.

04:52 Kim: So since Shannon has been with DeafBlind Ontario Services we’ve continued to see her grow and to flourish. Where some people might have expected Shannon to plateau, we’ve seen sometimes we’ve seen large areas of growth and sometimes we see it incrementally in small ways.

05:10 Kim: I think my husband and I are very optimistic about Shannon’s future. Our goal for Shannon was always that she would be independent as she could be and have a life apart from us as parents so that she had her own life and her own interests and her own friends and was able to go out into the community and participate in activities that Shannon was interested in so that Mom and Dad weren’t always her central focus. We wanted her to have a life of her own and I think that DeafBlind Ontario Services has definitely given her that opportunity to have the best life she can have on her own.