

My name is Suzanna Crawford, and I have been associated with Between Friends Club (BFC) as a volunteer and staff member since 2008. I began my journey as a group leader for Camp Bonaventure and since my introduction I have become immersed in the company in the following capacities: Camp Bonaventure (1 full contracted period as group leader in 2008 and 1 full contracted period as team leader in 2009; 640 hours), W.E.S.O.A.R.! Teen Swim (5 sessions; 160 hours), W.E.S.O.A.R.! 2011 Summer Adult Swim (1 session; 15 hours), I.C.A.N Twinkle Toes Dance (2 sessions; 70 hours), and Holiday Programs (8+ programs; 75 hours); as a volunteer for W.E.S.O.A.R.! 2010 Little Yogies (1 session; 20 hours), and fundraisers including book drives, Friendship Day, and Skate-A-Kid to Camp (3 years; 100 hours; \$2000 donated through personal fundraising).

With a total of 960 paid and 120 volunteer hours, I have had the pleasure of creating and maintaining many friendships and bonds that have changed my view and impacted my sense of self. The mission, vision, and values of BFC have become intrinsically embedded in my day-to-day life and have encouraged me to reach my full potential and view my community with an empowering perspective. I have made lifelong friendships with the participants, their families, and the staff of BFC. It is these relationships that help me in exemplifying the values of BFC. I can only hope that my impact on the community is as great as the impact the community has had on myself. My participation and interaction allow me to experience how BFC encourages the breaking of barriers, and the inclusion of its members as valued citizens within the community.

Through BFC, I have been introduced to three families that exhibit the impact BFC has had on the community. I have accumulated over 1200 hours (the Fournier's since 2009 (1035 hours); the Sigfuson's since 2010 (60 hours); and the Wagar's since 2011 (40 hours)). My induction and inclusion into these families through residential respite speaks volumes of the

community this company is built on; it shows that not only am I, but these families are living the mission, vision, and values taught by BFC.

The triumphs I have experienced with this company are endless, and the barriers and hardships I have overcome with the participants have created learning opportunities and fueled my desire for community change. Their impact is residual, and as so I have become a spokesperson to how meaningful the role of the company is in the community. My extensive experience with the special needs community exemplifies my love for empowering and encouraging the potential in people. My desire for change in the community directed my career choice to pursue my Bachelor of Nursing (2012 Alumni) following the completion of my Bachelor of Science (2011 Alumni). Nursing allows me to be an active member of the community and provides a forum for personal growth that will reciprocally benefit my involvement with BFC. Furthermore, this career choice allows me to employ the vision, mission, and values that have been instilled in me through my involvement with BFC.

BFC has changed my frame of thinking, impacting my beliefs and creating a context to encourage and exemplify their mission, vision, and values. They have given me the tools and motivation to promote acceptance, equality, and inclusion through my role in the organization and my subsequent participation in the wider community through respite and nursing. I can only show my appreciation for the company and their role in my life by continuing my active position as a volunteer and employee. I will conclude with the following metaphor: the student cannot be separated from the teacher; me as a student and BFC as the teacher. I hope to encourage this cycle through my continued involvement with BFC and my role as a Registered Nurse in 2012--once a student and now also a teacher.