



LM Photography

# You can help children like Alyssa, *right here at home.*



Cornwall Community  
Hospital Foundation

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If your child was in crisis, what would you do? Where would you go? If they had an injury or were sick, the answer would be pretty straight forward. You'd go to the hospital. But what if their pain wasn't easy to understand?

My eleven year old daughter Alyssa loves animals, her family and her friends. She's a creative kid – kind, funny and well-spoken. I'm so proud of her. Her smile is contagious; but not long ago, that smile was hard to find.

“I'm a person who just has a lot of extra worries,” Alyssa says with a shrug, summing up her struggle in a clear and simple way. Unfortunately, her path to feeling better was much too complicated.

Our journey started when Alyssa was 9 years old. She experienced frequent stomach aches, headaches and nausea, her absences from school started piling up, but health tests came back clear. As time passed, she transformed from a confident girl who independently attended sleepaway camp, to a child who dreaded going to school. Then things got worse. Social situations made Alyssa fearful; she became afraid to leave the house and rapidly lost weight from her already small frame. I was scared. What could be wrong?

I took time away from work to stay by Alyssa's side. I researched symptoms and brought Alyssa to numerous appointments, trying anything and everything to help her feel better. What's more, Alyssa required a definitive diagnosis before she could get the treatment she really needed, but an appointment at CHEO would require an eight-to-ten month wait. It was a dark time.

An eventual connection with a caring case worker from Cornwall Community Hospital got Alyssa a tele-psychiatric appointment over Skype with a psychiatrist from CHEO, cutting her wait time from 8-10 months down to three weeks. Alyssa was diagnosed with a generalized anxiety disorder; help was finally on its way.

Today, after building up trust and working hard in treatment, Alyssa has more good days than before. She is back at school and has a new group of friends who support her unconditionally. They understand that she's like everyone else, she just happens to have extra worries.

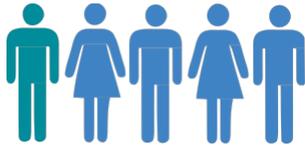
I don't regret the difficult journey Alyssa and I have travelled together as we have learned so much in the process and we are much stronger as a result; but I do believe it should be easier for parents and children suffering from mental health issues to navigate the system.

I want to help parents to get from point A to point B faster. It scares me to think that some parents won't make the connection to understand what's really wrong. I know Cornwall Community Hospital is working to make things easier, with the new Community Addiction and Mental Health Centre that will provide people in our community with a one stop shop to find help. But they can't do it on their own.

CCH Foundation is now fundraising to support integrated addiction and mental health services in our community. The new building is now open and clients are getting help, but fundraising is ongoing. Please consider making a donation so that other children like Alyssa get the support they need more quickly. To local families in need, your contribution means so much more than you know.

Thank you for sharing our story,  
Valerie Tinkess

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*Only 1 in 5 children  
who need mental  
health services  
receives them.  
Our Community  
Addiction &  
Mental Health  
Centre  
is here to help.*

## You may know someone like Alyssa

For kids like Alyssa, there's help right here at home. That's why our team at Cornwall Community Hospital Foundation is proud to fundraise for our new Community Addiction and Mental Health Centre.

Thanks to donors like you, we're halfway to our \$1.2 million goal. **Please give today;** your donation will help a child like Alyssa find the support they need sooner.