



## The York ASD Partnership Says Thank You and Farewell to Cathy Saul, Manager, Infant and Child Development Program, Early Intervention Services

By: Cindi Buick, Parent Rep (May 2017)

Cathy Saul was a guardian angel to me twenty years ago. Even *before* my son was diagnosed with autism prior to his third birthday, she was there with a kind heart and oh-so-many words of wisdom as we started our long journey navigating autism services in a very complicated system.

Looking back, it was the solid beginning offered by Cathy and her staff that instilled resilience and inspired me to 'give back' once I got on an even keel. I have been volunteering in the autism community for many years now and re-connected with Cathy in 2008 as community leaders came together to form the York ASD Partnership. The Partnership is a unique collaborative of community service-providers, government agencies, educators, hospitals, advocacy organizations, parents and self-advocates with a strong commitment to improve systems of support for children, youth and adults living with Autism Spectrum Disorder. See [our partners](#).

Over the years, I've met some amazing people at various agencies and both school boards, but Cathy always stood out for me. Early on, my mom-radar told me she was going to make things easier for my family ... and for other families. I was right.

She has been a strong voice and leader for the past nine years serving as a full Partnership member, a Steering Committee representative and Co-Chair of the Screening and Assessment Working Group. She often served as minute-taker at Partnership meetings, illustrating that everything we did was important and no job was beneath her.

In many meetings, over almost a decade, Cathy never hesitated to dive in and offer solutions, even if (especially when) they seemed to push the envelope. When it came to improving autism services - not just at Early Intervention Services but *system-wide* - she was always thinking outside the box and always thinking about "families first". She is a trailblazer who goes beyond the 'talk the talk' and absolutely 'walks the walk'.

Cathy Saul is reluctantly saying good-bye to the York ASD Partnership after years of dedication to our meaningful work. She has been an active contributor in our quest to improve autism services for families living in York Region. She cares about us. She cares that the system supports us appropriately. And she cared enough to invest in the monumental job of making that happen.

While we won't be seeing her at meetings as we continue to implement the goals in our Strategic Plan, we can breathe easy knowing she will be tweaking services and programs at Early Intervention Services in response to family needs.

Thank you from all the families you have touched, Cathy. And don't be a stranger.