

# Couple turns their darkest hour into light for others



By [Vicki Gough](#), Chatham Daily News

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Amiera Black, left, hugs Sarah Stone during an event at Community Living Chatham-Kent where the nine-year-old received a \$1,000 grant from the Jonathan Daniel Stone Fund for an iPad to help with her educational needs and fine motor skills

Parents united by their own personal experiences raising children with special needs made emotional connections in Chatham.

Dr. Jonathan Stone, and his wife Sarah, awarded \$1,000 grants to the first two recipients of the Jonathan Daniel Stone Fund during a presentation held at Community Living Chatham-Kent on Friday.

The fund was initiated by the Stone family as a way to celebrate the life of their beloved son, and brother, Daniel, who had been diagnosed with autism and passed away in May 2013 at the age of 11.

"We wanted to do something really concrete and tangible," Sarah Stone told The Chatham Daily News.

And that's exactly what would become apparent.

Amiera Black rushed to hug Sarah Stone after receiving her grant.

The nine-year-old's mother, Jennifer Black, told The Daily News they will use the money to buy an iPad for Amiera, as recommended by her occupational therapist.

The device will assist Amiera with her educational needs, fine motor skills and also to experiment with an online language and reading program to build her speech, language and reading skills.

Amiera said having the iPad will help her with "writing, reading and talk better."

The second recipient was Cruz Moco.

The four-year-old's mother, Meri Kim Moco said the grant completes a project to give her son access to an intensive behavioural intervention program in Blenheim.

"We have three children at three different schools currently ... so it just takes a little bit of the burden off of Jeff who's at work and it takes the burden off me who has to be home for the other two children as well," Moco said.

"We have our little extra challenges, but we're working through it and things are going well," Jeff Moco added.

No one knows the challenges more than the Stones who considered themselves fortunate to be able to build their son, Daniel, a school setting at home and hire teachers.

"Not everyone can do that," Sarah Stone said.

"We had to access certain things that would help our son and we just knew it was difficult and although there are lots of things available in the community, it can sometimes be difficult for families to get to the services ... and they can wait years," Dr. Stone added.

The funds will provide Cruz with safe and supportive daily transportation between Chatham and Blenheim to attend programming his parents are so thankful to have for their son.

"Just the technicalities of getting that little boy to his program and both his parents have to work and they have two other children, that's very real for some people, a real barrier," Sarah Stone said.

Daniel's Fund will annually support initiatives for families and their children who have been diagnosed with autism and other intellectual disabilities.

The fund is offered for recreational activities, educational workshops for parents and siblings, advocacy, vocation and life skills development.

Assistive devices and equipment to promote and facilitate learning or communication will also be considered for grants.

Recipient projects are reviewed by the Stones, an individual supported by CLCK, plus a staff and board member of the agency.

"It just takes time for the awareness to build and people to know that it's there and most importantly we want people to know, a lot of people did give (to Daniel's Fund) and it's being used," Sarah Stone said.

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