

Heroes in the Home Caregiver Recognition Award 2018

Ana Long



For the past 12 years, Ana has been the main caregiver for her son Evan who has been living with mental health illness. As his health has changed and deteriorated, Ana has continued to alter her life to accommodate Evan's needs and to be available for him. She has had to learn how to take care of herself and maintain the level of energy necessary for her to manage Evan's complex needs.

Even through the toughest times, Ana considers it a privilege to be a caregiver for someone as vulnerable and unique as her son Evan and uses love as her daily motivation. Ana has made dozens of hospital visits to spend time with her son and to meet with psychiatrists and other health professionals to discuss her son's complex health and for plan his care.

Ana has spent numerous hours attending educational sessions to help her provide the best support for Evan, including a recent four week psycho-educational program. She has turned down fulltime employment opting to work part time so she can be available immediately for her son whenever she is needed.

When Ana has the time, she enjoys taking walks, reading and watching movies. She cherishes coffee dates with her friends and practices yoga to help keep her grounded, and also has plans to take up knitting and to become a baby rocker at her local hospital. Ana has been involved with the Speak Now initiative and received 12 weeks of training in presentation skills to share personal experiences with poverty, which can be a common element for caregivers and people with brain injury and serious mental illness and addiction issues. Ana considers public speaking a strong form of advocacy.

One of Ana's favourite quotes is from Martin Luther King Jr: *Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.* For Ana, anger for personal circumstances can only pull one into darkness resulting in few lasting changes. Instead, Ana prefers to channel upsets into productive action to create change by shining light on the issues in an effort to reduce suffering and improve people's lives.

With lived experience in caring for a son on a recovery trajectory, Ana brings hope to other caregivers by dedicating her time to helping them cope. We are grateful to Ana for her perseverance, tenacity and loving approach to caring for Evan, and we are pleased to recognize her as a Hero in the Home!



**Nominated by
Sharon Smikle**