

# INCLUSION AWARD BRINGS COMMUNITY TOGETHER

*Olivia Zwack and her Dog Guide further inspire Warman students to celebrate being unique*

The Martensville Lions are excited to share a local story about a unique family with which the Club has a connection. The Zwack family out of Warman, SK have just put into place a legacy award – *The Olivia and Ivan Zwack Inclusion Award* – at E'cole Warman Elementary School and have named the first student recipient.

Throughout Olivia's school years, Sherri often set aside time to go in and talk with

the kids about both being different, and celebrating being different. She even created a small book about Olivia, showcasing how Down's Syndrome and Autism makes her unique, put together awareness crafts and pamphlets to shared with Olivia's peers at school, and making sure to allow children to ask questions in a safe environment.

"We would have open questions ...and celebrate with cupcakes or a mini dance party," Sherri added.

"To this day, we get little ones who come up and tell us how they have never forgotten it – what they learned and how they now contribute in their own ways to be inclusive. Kids sometimes will tell us how that helped or how they think Olivia is so cute! Each student says 'hello' to Olivia and NOW she's saying it back with her communication device."

When Olivia's service dog Ivan came to her (thanks to sponsorship from the Martensville Lions Club), he helped her at school, too. He provided Olivia with comfort, friendship and safety and the other children were naturally drawn to him, helping the Zwack family to better connect and find more common ground with them. "Both became an outstanding team! Now they are kind of mini celebrities walking the hall." Sherri shared.

Then, when Olivia's last year at the school arrived, Sherri and her husband Jeff wanted to do something more. Sherri Zwack explains further, "Our family wanted to leave behind a growing legacy that would continue to educate young minds on how to form relationships, and be inclusive with those with disabilities. This is where learning begins and young minds don't judge unless told to. That's where we mould them into better people."

The family approached the school and shared the plan with a great outcome; the principal, vice principal and staff were all on board and helped to set up the legacy award for a successful future.



Kaylee Bender was the first recipient of the Inclusion Award, given out in May to the Warman elementary school student.



The Zwack family created an Inclusion Award inspired by daughter Olivia and her LFC Dog Guide, Ivan. Pictured, left to right: Jeff, Olivia, Sherri, and younger brother Eric.

In May, the Zwack family presented the first Olivia and Ivan Zwack Inclusion Award to Kaylee Bender, who they wanted to acknowledge as an outstanding student. Kaylee's name appears on the official plaque and she also received a separate certificate in recognition.

The school promises to carry forward Olivia and Ivan's magical story for future students; each year they will share a video the family made on 'Inclusion Week', another little video, and recognize a student recipient.

To watch the family's video about Olivia and the Inclusion Award, you can do so on YouTube [HERE](#).

- with information from the Martensville Lions Club and Zwack family



YouTube