

## **Special needs family appreciates network**

By Sandra Bolan May 14, 2010 - 3:04 PM

Two-and-a-half years ago, Heather Hamilton gave birth to twin boys Jayden and Zack.

From the minute Heather and her husband, Paul, saw Zack, they knew something was wrong.

Zack was born with a rare genetic deletion, which has caused several health and developmental issues. His brother Jayden does not have special needs.

"He's the only one ... with this genetic case, so it's all a surprise to us," the Richmond Hill resident said of her son's nameless disease.

Despite having no name, Mrs. Hamilton initially spent hours combing the Internet for any bit of information.

She also made more calls than she can count to a myriad of agencies looking for assistance.

"When you have a child with multiple needs, you need multiple specialists," she said. "What a challenge it is to get those treatments and services."

Then she discovered Children's Treatment Network of Simcoe York, which provides co-ordinated care for children up to 19 years of age who have multiple special needs.

Children's Treatment Network of Simcoe York, which is a not-for-profit organization funded by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, opened its first resource centre in Barrie in September 2006.

The York Region centre opened nine months later in Oak Ridges.

Four other York centres have since opened – Markham, Vaughan, Newmarket and Georgina – and together they serve more than 2,800 York Region children with special needs.

"It's the only model of its kind," said Rhonda Jacobson, local team facilitator.

There are more than 50 agencies and organizations in the network. Rehabilitation therapies available include speech/language, occupational, physical and nutritional.

Consultative services available include augmentative communication, development assessment, feeding/swallowing, video fluoroscopy, seating/mobility, joint management and orthotics.

What makes Children's Treatment Network unique is that all therapists, agencies and organizations communicate with each other.

"What that means is the family doesn't have to tell their story over and over again," Ms Jacobson said.

"The approach it as a team," Mrs. Hamilton said. "Everyone will help Zack get to his goals."

For the first time, Children's Treatment Network will be hosting an information fair for York Region families of children and youth with special needs.

"It's an opportunity for parents who might feel isolated to realize they aren't and there are a lot of other parents just like them," Mrs. Hamilton said. "There is nothing more empowering (and) inspiring than seeing other families like mine."

There will be more than 60 health care, education, recreation, community service and private treatment providers at the fair, which takes place on Tuesday at the Community Safety Village of York Region in Bruce's Mill Conservation Area, 3291 Stouffville Rd., from 3 to 8 p.m. The event is free.

<http://www.yorkregion.com/news/local/article/817085--special-needs-family-appreciates-network>