

## **John George LEGER**

John Leger, passed away on January 27, 2019, at the age of 51 years.

John was born in Niagara Falls in 1968 and moved to Ottawa soon after. He grew up in a loving foster family and in 1992, John came to live at Christian Horizons.

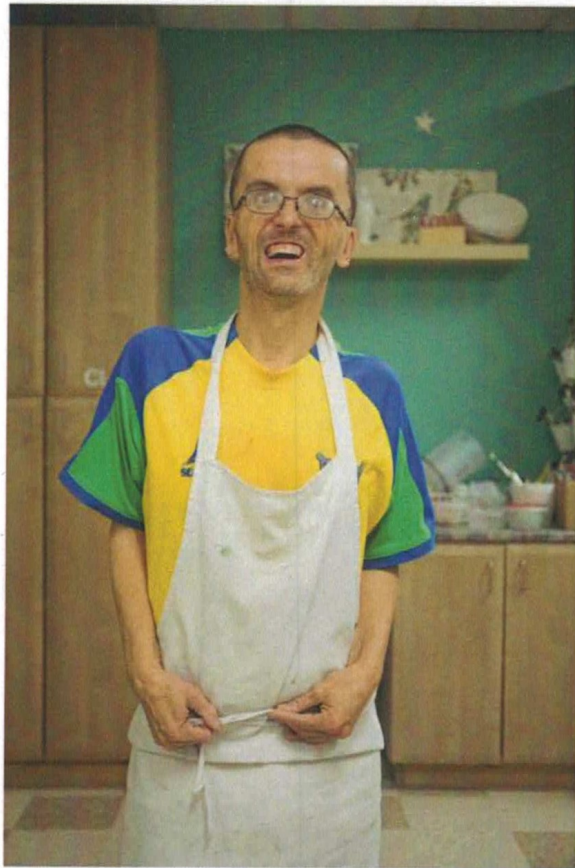
John will be forever remembered by his closest friends and roommates from Clearview Apartments – Robert, Chris, Maria, Sherry, Jobi, Susie and Rachael. He will be remembered fondly by all the staff at Christian Horizons, his colleagues, friends and staff at Grow Studios where he worked, and by his many friends and his wide network of supporters.

John was a long time member of Bethel Pentecostal Church and Friendship Club. He cherished his independence and freedom, and was a relentless advocate for himself and all people living with disabilities. He enthusiastically served on committees of numerous organizations, including Bethel Pentecostal Church, Christian Horizons, Citizen Advocacy and Island Park Towers. John loved many activities including swimming and bowling and participated in Special Olympics.

He loved to be out and around in the community and at Tim Hortons, and never missed a chance to be with friends at parties and gatherings.

Memorial donations in memory of John may be made to Christian Horizons ([www.christian-horizons.org](http://www.christian-horizons.org)).

## JOHN LEGER



“I used to have brothers and siblings, but not anymore. I was taken away from my family back to Ottawa by CAS because I was neglected. I was not well taken care of. There are some notes and history that they didn’t take care of me properly and the neighbours got concerned. So, the CAS transferred me from Niagara Falls to Ottawa, to a foster family. I grew up in a foster family until about 1992 and then came to Christian Horizon. I’ve been here ever since. Here, I do a lot of tuning, a lot of sanding, I do ink and I do woodshop. Outside of work, I go to church, I go swimming and I do a lot of stuff. I guess I can look for a relationship, but I never bother. I decided to be myself. I like being myself. It’s ok to be single. I like helping other people. I’ve always wanted to go on a mission trip. In 2006, I went to Ecuador with Christian Horizon. I loved being there. It was a third-world country, and I guess it made me realize that here in Canada we have it all, compared to other countries. After coming back, I no longer take anything for granted. I’ll always be happy that I get to vote and will always be happy that I get my freedom; I get to go about in the streets, go to restaurants, go to Tim Hortons and not worry about it.”

# Citizen Advocacy: Building Friendships

By Sage Mosurinjohn-English

Citizen Advocacy of Ottawa was started in 1974 when two men decided they wanted to move out of the group home they had been living in and into their own apartment. But they couldn't do it alone. The men were matched with two volunteers who helped them through the steps to support them in their independent lives.

Since then, the organization has helped more than 2,000 Ottawa residents living with disabilities by setting up one-on-one relationships with volunteers. These relationships build friendships and support systems for people. The matches usually last about

five years, but some have lasted 25 years.

The friendships are built on things as easy as meeting to chat once a week, going for a drive or going shopping. One volunteer even took his match to vote for the first time. The confidence and independence that these friendships build are the most important intangible benefits to the program.

With its unassuming office passed by residents daily on their commute down Parkdale Street, it's hard to imagine the impact that this organization has on the daily lives of its members. Peter Roorda has volunteered with Citizen Advocacy for about two years.

He knew he wanted to volunteer with the community, but he wanted to find the right kind of position.

"I was looking for a long-term commitment," says Roorda. "I wanted to act in a core role."

A couple of months after applying he was matched with John Leger, a man living in a group home in the neighbourhood. They became fast friends and started going to movies or coffee, even sharing a weekend at the cottage together last summer.

Roorda says they went canoeing, roasted marshmallows and just hung out as friends for the weekend. "Something as simple as that, for him, is a

new and foreign experience," says Roorda.

He says situations do come up where matches reach out to their volunteers for help and more than a casual friendship. Roorda says he sees his

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## Citizen Advocacy

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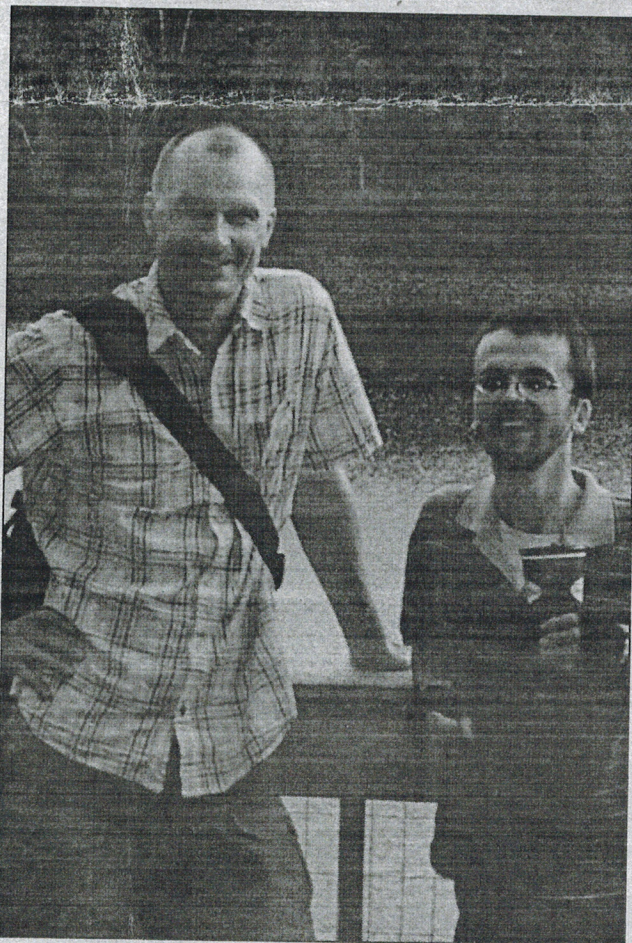
vulnerable Leger can be and their relationship represents a connection with the community for Leger.

"My relationship is pretty much just as any friend relationship," says Roorda.

Citizen Advocacy runs fundraising and community-building events all through the year, but their main event is the Evening in the Maritimes. It's a five-course lobster special dinner event with live music and a silent auction.

During the past 15 years, the event has raised more than a million dollars for the organization. It takes place later this month on May 27 at the Hotel Lac-Leamy.

Brian Tardif, the executive director of Citizen Advocacy, says the organization is all about inclusion of people living with disabilities and providing a valued social position



Peter Roorda and John Leger now spend time together as friends after being matched through the Citizen's Advocacy program.

*The 15th annual Evening in the Maritimes will be held at the Hilton Lac Leamy. Join us for a delicious*

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