2020 Gerry Bloomfield Award Winners

Autism Ontario is pleased to announce the recipients of the Gerry Bloomfield Awards for 2020: David Baker, Brendon Pooran, and Connie Putterman. These individuals have been recognized for their outstanding professional contributions to the field of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), and Autism Ontario is thrilled to recognize the critical role they have played in the lives of people on the autism spectrum and their families.

Gerry Bloomfield was a founding member of OSAC (Ontario Society for Autistic Children), which later became Autism Ontario. These awards are given by our Board of Directors in recognition of his outstanding contributions to Autism Ontario and to the cause of Autism Spectrum Disorders.

The recipients of this year's Gerry Bloomfield Award were celebrated at the September 26th Annual General Meeting (AGM) for Autism Ontario, where they addressed the participants of the AGM.

Professional Awards

David Baker, recipient of the Gerry Bloomfield Professional Award, collaborated with the leadership of the disabled community to establish ARCH, the Advocacy Resource Centre for the Handicapped, becoming its founding Executive Director. David has provided training to judges and has lectured at law schools and seminars for the legal profession. At the international level, David has served on the UNESCO Panel of International Human Rights Experts. In Ontario, David is also known for his legal representation of families of children on the autism spectrum on human rights matters, particularly in the areas of education and intervention.

Brendon Pooran of PooranLaw is also this year's recipient of the Gerry Bloomfield Professional Award. Brendon has been involved with various disability organizations as a member, volunteer, employee or director for most of his life. He created PooranLaw to provide support to this community and to influence disability law and policy throughout Canada. In addition to practicing law, Brendon teaches Critical Disability Law at York University, is the Past-President of Community Living York South and is a founding director of both PLAN Toronto (now Partners for Planning) and Microboards Ontario. Brendon is also known for his advocacy efforts on behalf of people on the

autism spectrum and their families and for providing a widely available range of practical education seminars on matters of disability rights and resources.

Volunteer Award

Connie Putterman is this year's Gerry Bloomfield Volunteer Award recipient. Connie is an outstanding parent advocate for autism research, and parent engagement and inclusion, and is the founder and visionary of the Canada/Israel Autism Research Initiative. Connie has represented the "parent voice" in research settings, publicly spoken both in Canada and overseas, managed conferences, developed programming, managed skills development, and facilitated business opportunities. Her blog- the Parent Link, and Ted Talk-Finding your Waze, reflect her perspectives. As founder of the Canada/Israel Autism Research Initiative, she helped to organize the first Canada-Israel Autism Spectrum Disorders Research Symposium. Connie's contributions as a member of the Patient Advisory Committee for the Province of Ontario's Neurodevelopmental Network, supported by the Ontario Brain Institute have been exemplary in providing a parent perspective on autism research for many years.

About the Gerry Bloomfield Awards

The Gerry Bloomfield Award for outstanding professional contributions to the field of Autism Spectrum Disorders or to Autism Ontario is awarded in recognition of the critical role played by professionals in the lives of people on the autism spectrum and their families. It may be awarded to an individual or group of individuals whose efforts have contributed to improving the quality of life for a person or persons on the spectrum through:

- Improving programs
- Research, and/or
- Establishing guidelines and policies.

The Professional Award may also be awarded to someone whose efforts have had direct influence in making a significant change in the lives of autistic people and their families.

The Gerry Bloomfield Award for outstanding contributions to Autism Ontario by a volunteer may be awarded to an individual or group of individuals whose efforts have contributed to improving the quality of life for a person or persons on the autism spectrum through:

- Promoting public awareness and understanding
- Advocating on behalf of Autism Ontario, and/or
- Supporting the families and communities through outstanding work at the Chapter level.

The Volunteer Award may be awarded to someone whose efforts have created a greater profile for an Autism Ontario Chapter or the organization with the community at large. The recipient(s) should be a past or present member of Autism Ontario and should have demonstrated integrity, commitment, and loyalty over a sustained period to the lives of people on the autism spectrum.

Click here to view past Gerry Bloomfield Award recipients.