

## Ode to a Support Worker: The Unsung Hero & Reflections on Supports Received

### About the Author & Inspiration Behind the Poems

My name is Yvonne Spicer, and I am the co-founder of Lifetime Abilities, an organization built on the belief that everyone deserves to be seen, heard, and valued. My journey has been shaped by personal experiences and the people I have met along the way. Over the years, I have learned the importance of connection, understanding, and creating spaces where everyone feels included and supported.

I started Lifetime Abilities because I wanted to use my experiences to help people build confidence, embrace their abilities, and find their voices. It has been an incredible path filled with challenges and achievements, and through it all, I have seen how powerful it can be when people come together to support one another.

The poems I have written about support workers come from a place of deep gratitude. Support workers play such an important role in the lives of the people they assist. They are not just there to provide help—they are companions, encouragers, and trusted guides. They walk alongside us during our hardest challenges and our greatest triumphs. Their patience, compassion, and understanding often make the difference between simply getting by and truly thriving.

Through these poems, I wanted to honour and celebrate their dedication. I wanted to express the appreciation and respect that is often felt but not always spoken. My hope is that these words remind support workers of the incredible impact they have and encourage others to see the value of the relationships we build with them.

For me, these poems are more than writing. They are a reflection of my journey, my gratitude, and my belief that together, we can create communities where everyone's abilities are recognized and celebrated.

### *Poems & Reflections*

*The author has provided the following pieces:*

- *Inspiration behind the Poems*
- *Where Strength meets Kindness*
- *Timeless Efforts*
- *Unsung Heros – A Vital Art*
- *Reflections*
- *Closing Note*

## **Where strength meets kindness**

Approach me with kindness, pure and sincere,  
A gentle heart, willing to hear.  
See me as whole, not just my past,  
A person with stories, a vast journey.  
Respect my voice, let it be known,  
In the garden of healing, let empathy be sown.  
Walk beside me, neither ahead nor behind,  
In the tapestry of care, our paths entwined.  
Give me space to breathe, to grow,  
In moments of silence, let understanding flow.  
Trust in my strength, my will to mend,  
In the realm of support, let's befriend.  
Hold my hand with steady grace,  
In the dance of recovery, let's find our pace.  
With compassion as your guiding star,  
Together we'll journey, no matter how far.  
For in your care, I seek not just aid,  
But a partnership in the life we've made.  
Treat me with dignity, love, and respect,  
In the bond of support, let us connect.

## **Tireless Efforts**

For all the kindness that you share,  
The heartfelt moments that you care.  
In every word, in every deed,  
You fulfill a noble, selfless creed.  
Through trials dark and days so long,  
Your steadfast spirit makes us strong.

Your tireless efforts light up our way,  
Turning night to brightened day.  
To all support workers, true and kind,  
In you, the best of us we find.

## **Unsung Heroes – A Vital Art**

Beneath the city's roaring hum,  
Where shadows of life often succumb,  
There walks a soul with a heart so bright,  
A beacon of hope in the darkest night.  
With gentle hands and a knowing smile,  
They traverse each weary mile,  
To lift the fallen, to mend the heart,  
A tireless role, a vital art.  
They sit by bedsides through the silent hours,  
A sentinel in life's fragile towers,  
Listening to whispers of pain and fear,  
Offering solace, drawing near.  
In crowded rooms or lonely homes,  
Through endless calls and patient tones,  
Their presence is soothing balm,  
A touch of grace, a voice of calm.  
With every task, both big and small,  
They answered the sacred call,  
To serve, to care, to understand,  
To offer a steady, guiding hand.  
They wear no caps, no shining crowns,  
Yet they heal the heartaches, soothe the frowns,  
In their eyes, a tender light,  
Reflecting love in the darkest night.

To the support worker, this ode we sing,  
For all the grace and hope you bring,  
Your silent strength, your quiet might,  
A silent hero in the fight.  
So, here's to you, the steadfast guide,  
With endless patience by your side,  
Thank you for the work you do,  
An ode to the hero that is you.

So, here's to you, my guiding star,  
My gratitude reaches wide and far.

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### **My Reflection on the Supports I Received**

I have been part of Community Living North Halton for many years — from October 1995 to October 2018. Looking back, I feel incredibly grateful for all the care, guidance, and encouragement I received from the staff during that time. They helped me explore programs and join activities, always making me feel included, valued, and capable.

I worked in the sheltered workshop and could rely on the Supported Independent Living staff whenever I needed support — they were always there, and that meant so much to me. I also had opportunities to experience supported employment, living independently, and even helped start the advocacy group. Their mentorship gave me confidence, shaped who I am, and showed me what I am truly capable of achieving.

I remember thinking, *"I never realized I could do this,"* and feeling proud every time I learned something new about myself.

One of my fondest memories is the Friday Friends group, which holds a very special place in my heart. I loved visiting places like Wildwood Manor Ranch and Road Horses, going bowling, watching movies, and making crafts at the church. I reconnected with high school peers, played board games, and even attended a Christmas party with Santa. Those experiences made me feel part of a community, supported, and celebrated just for being me.

I remember feeling so joyful and connected at that Christmas party. It made me realize how important it is to have people who truly see and celebrate you for who you are.

Over the years, the staff encouraged me to take more responsibility for myself and grow my independence. They also supported me in starting the advocacy group. At that time, I did not know much about advocacy, so this was the beginning of my journey — learning what advocacy

really is, how to do it, and why it matters. In school, I was never taught about self-advocacy, so it was completely new to me.

Even though it felt unfamiliar at first, I now see it as a turning point — one of the first steps that helped me find my voice, stand up for myself and others, and discover a passion that has stayed with me ever since.

There were also moments when, because of health issues or concerns about managing money, staff suggested involving a Public Guardian and Trustee. At the time, I believed I could handle things myself, but looking back, I now see those moments as part of the guidance and mentorship that helped me learn, grow, and build confidence in a safe and supportive way.

I realized that learning to manage responsibilities and discovering advocacy was not a limitation — it was an opportunity to grow, gain confidence, and learn skills that school never taught me.

Advocacy became a big part of my life. Joining the Voice Committee gave me the chance to speak up about the challenges people with developmental disabilities face and to encourage others to share their stories too. It showed me that my voice matters and that I could use my experiences to help others.

I felt empowered when I saw that speaking up could inspire change. It helped me understand that the challenges I faced could actually make a difference for someone else.

I also remember working in retail for a time. It was challenging for me — I often felt uncomfortable, out of place, and overwhelmed by the fast pace. Employers would even call me on my days off, which made it difficult to have a life outside of work. While I learned from that experience, I realized the environment did not match my strengths or comfort zone. I wanted work where I could thrive, use my skills, and feel supported.

That experience taught me what did not work for me and helped me focus on finding something that truly matched my strengths.

That is when I found the receptionist role at Community Living North Halton's main office. Starting something new was a challenge, but I gradually learned the routine — answering phone calls, working in payroll, and managing the front desk. People often told me I was friendly, kind, and welcoming, which reminded me that I could make a positive impression. Over time, I gained confidence, learned more about myself, and discovered that I could contribute in meaningful ways.

I also began to see some of the injustices faced by people with unique challenges, and it motivated me to speak up, stand strong, and help others be heard. I remember the first day I managed the front desk on my own — I felt so proud and capable. That moment reminded me how much I had grown.

Now, together with my partner Theresa Somerton, we have started Lifetime Abilities. It feels wonderful to continue giving back, supporting people of all abilities, and helping others find their voice.

Reflecting on my journey, I can see how far I have come — how much I have grown, learned, and been supported along the way. My life has shown me the power of community, mentorship, and believing in yourself. Every step — every challenge, success, and learning moment — has shaped who I am today.

I feel deeply grateful for the support I received and for the Direct Support Professionals who walked beside me over the years. Their encouragement helped me find my confidence, my independence, and my passion for advocacy. They are also the reason I wanted to write my poems — to honour the people who dedicate their time, patience, and care to helping others succeed.

Every experience has taught me something valuable about myself, about others, and about the importance of supporting one another.

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### **Closing Note**

Thank you for taking the time to read my poems and learn a little about my journey. My hope is that these words shine a light on the incredible work that support workers do and the difference they make in people's lives every day. Their kindness, patience, and dedication often go unseen, but their impact is truly life changing.

I also hope these poems inspire you to reflect on the value of compassion, understanding, and connection. Together, we can create a world where everyone feels supported, respected, and celebrated for who they are.

With gratitude,

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