



## Anthony's Camp Interview

By Colleen Wheatley – Manager, Programs and Services  
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*Recently, Colleen Wheatley sat down with Anthony LaFlamme-Lemieux to talk about his experience with Camp Trailblazers.*



Anthony is proud to explain that he attended the very first AboutFace teen retreat back in 2003, before it had even been named Trailblazers. Anthony recalls that at 13 years old he was the only male camper and might have been a little lonely had Randy (Camp Director 2010-2011) not been there as a volunteer. He attended camp every year until he was 18 and no longer eligible as camper. He then had to wait a few years before the Leadership Expedition was established in 2011 and has been an active participant on the last two trips.

When asked whether he thinks Trailblazers has changed over the years, Anthony isn't sure. He says while the location has changed a few times and there are more people, the focus remains the same.

Trailblazers is a chance for campers to meet other kids with facial differences and share their experiences. Anthony sees it as a chance to show yourself and others that you are not alone. Looking back on the impact Trailblazers has had on him, Anthony says it helped him be more open and more comfortable talking about lots of things.

If Anthony met a prospective camper he would simply tell them that they need to come to camp. He then elaborates saying that it's a great way to meet new people, get a break from school and parents and experience new things. When thinking about what he would tell parents, Anthony would inform them that Trailblazers can help your kid be more open, build self-confidence and meet other kids like them. He also adds that some campers might experience bullying and might not want to upset their parents, so it's a chance for them to talk about it with others.

Anthony says he wanted to volunteer at camp, because "why wouldn't you?" He explains that it is different coming to Trailblazers as a volunteer instead of a camper. First of all there is more responsibility; you have to remember that you are there for the campers not for yourself. Volunteers have to be more mature, watch what words you use, because they are role models.



Whenever Anthony is asked to look back on his experiences at Trailblazers he always starts to smile and often begins to laugh when he remembers a funny story. It's hard to separate the memories from over



the years: a cold dip in the lake, someone facing fears on the rock wall; late night conversations, campfires; camp food (good and bad) and all of the inside jokes. Anthony has stayed in contact with many campers over the years and talks about the ‘old gang’, he still looks forward to seeing them at various AboutFace events.



Anthony was one of the original ‘Trailblazers’. He has been a part of a great legacy and wants to be there to welcome new campers in the future.