

Amanda Groves aiming for self-sufficiency



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Intelligencer

You might say Groves grooves to the Caribbean beat.

She likes Bob Marley and hip hop stars Sean Paul and, to a lesser degree, Shaggy.

Just like any 23-year-old college student, with one exception — Groves, first name Amanda, is blind.

The Madoc resident was only eight-and-a-half-months old when she lost her eyes to cancer. Unlike many blind people, she is totally without sight.

"I can't really see at all," she said during an interview at the Loyalist College, where she is in her first year of the two-year paralegal course.

Groves took the paralegal avenue because she is interested in coming to the aid of tenants who end up with slum landlords who take the rent but refuse to do repairs. It is her willingness to help that makes her a good Quinte neighbour.

"Sometimes landlords give you a hard time," Groves said.

The Madoc resident was born in Toronto and she went to a preschool for sightless children, but her parents decided to pack up Amanda and her brother and move to a rural environment.

"Toronto can be a very dangerous city," she said. "If they are going to play out in the backyard are they going to be safe," was the worry.

When Groves arrived at Tyendinaga Township school, the question was if she would go there or move away and live in residence at a school for the blind.

The principal told Groves' parents that they could accommodate her in the rural school.

It was the right choice, she said.

"I think he was very supportive to my

parents," Groves said. "It would have been pretty hard (to leave home)."

Still, even the separation between the township school and her home was hard — in Toronto her dad drove kids to the school and her mother was never far away.

"I realized ... they weren't there so it was hard for me," she said. That was in junior kindergarten, but the next year was better.

"In senior kindergarten I found things a little easier."

The decision to remain in Madoc was the right one because it taught her lessons she has used and will use later in life, she said.

"It's important to learn how to function in a normal world or you won't learn ...," Groves said. "He (the principal) was right or I wouldn't have learned ... and I wouldn't be as comfortable as I am now."

Indeed. She went to Madoc Public for Grade 1 and has accomplished much in her life, graduating from the elementary school and Madoc's Centre Hastings Secondary School.

She has been enrolled at Loyalist since 2004, taking a general social justice program until making the decision to go into the paralegal profession.

Along the way she has received help.