

Local resident with guide dog unable to find college housing

By Eamonn Maher
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Tracey Bazso thought she'd finally attained the independence to attend college and move out on her own after getting a dog guide to help manage with her once-a-week Grand mal seizures.

The 20-year-old graduated from Georgetown District High School in 2013 and had been waiting several months for yellow lab Dixie to enter her life thanks to the Lions Foundation of Dog Guides.

Along with taking medication that mitigates the severity and frequency of the debilitating seizures, Dixie's arrival meant that Bazso could begin living a mostly normal life on her own with the blessing of doctors and her father.

Dixie is trained to push a life-alert system when she senses Bazso is having a seizure and the dog is able to fetch medication and her owner's phone, while barking to bring the attention of others to the situation.

"Dixie's much more than a pet to me. She's a lifesaver," said Bazso, who on many occasions has awoken with a bloody nose or in the care of paramedics after a seizure.

"Unfortunately, a lot of people have no

understanding for my rights as a service dog owner or the laws around service dogs."

Bazso was accepted into the American Sign Language and Deaf Studies program at George Brown College in Toronto in December of last year and shortly after began applying for student housing.

In March 2015, she filled out many application forms for a residence called Campus Commons, which is a separate entity from George Brown College, indicating that she required a dog guide for her seizures. She now regrets divulging that information.

By May, Bazso hadn't received a response from Campus Commons and decided to call the landlord. The woman at first said she hadn't received the application, and then after finding it, Bazso says she was told that having a guide dog "wasn't a good fit" for the facility or potential roommates.

Discussions continued with the landlord until early August and Bazso felt confident that she'd be able to obtain a lease in an apartment at Campus Commons, but said she was told that her room had been given away and there was no other accommodation.

A spokesperson for Campus Commons told the CBC that Bazso's service dog wasn't the issue that led to her inability to find hous-



As Youth Co-ordinator at St. Andrew's United Church in Georgetown, Tracey Bazso and her dog guide Dixie were dressed up for a recent Costume Day at summer camp. Photo by Eamonn Maher

ing at its building, and that she'd been offered a room in July but didn't respond in time, which Bazso denies.

Bazso said commuting from her home in Georgetown to George Brown College using public transit is one of her only options at this point, but it will take three hours each way by bus and on two days of the week she has just one hour-long class scheduled.

Bazso said she might ask George Brown College whether she can take correspondence courses or communicate with her instructors via Skype or in some other medium.

She continues to search for a room in the area but so far the only rental opening she found was an unfurnished \$1,000-a-month room with utilities not included.

"I'm really stressed out at this point," she added. "There's only a couple of weeks before classes start and I've been searching and searching, but there's nothing out there that I've seen is feasible for just myself, without roommates. It seems like everything is just hung up right now and it's very frustrating."

George Brown's director of student experience, Gerard Hayes, said last week the college would help her find accommodation, but Bazso said Wednesday she hasn't heard anything back from them.



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