

## **Kim's Story**

Kim and Pam have been friends for five years. They go to the movies, dinner and football and have become as close as family.

Kim, who was born with cerebral palsy, lived in different institutions for most of his life. In 1996, while living on a 'farm' in Richmond, Kim ran away because he was so unhappy. "It was a bad situation. I wasn't allowed to do things that I wanted to and had no choice in activities on the weekend," Kim said. "I just sat and did nothing. I was given medication that made me tired and groggy."

A friend had told Kim about CAWS and that led to him meeting Pam. "It has been perfect, really great," Kim said. "If it wasn't for Pam and Kaye (CAWS Harris Park manager), I wouldn't be here now," he said.

But it isn't just the client who gains from the relationship. Pam Branch loves being Kim's advocate, saying that it is a very positive experience. "It is wonderful! We have such a good time! It is more inspiring than anything I've ever done," Pam said. "The program is all about having people with intellectual disabilities out in the community." She said.

CAWS staff believe that it takes a special person to become an advocate. It requires the gift of friendship, a genuine caring nature and compassion.