

ANTHONY SADDIK: MAKING THE IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBLE

Finger puppets. Hand puppets. Shadow puppets. Stick puppets. After 15 years volunteering in puppet shows, Antony Saddik knows his stuff. And, since emigrating to Toronto from Cairo, Egypt in July 2017, he has been looking to use his knowledge and talent to help children learn, socialize and communicate with the help of puppets and characters.

“WE WERE VOLUNTEERS [in Egypt] and we would travel all over the place with our equipment. We brought fun to all the children and youth in hospitals, schools, churches and conferences, making them very happy,” explains Saddik. “We were a team and we created the shows...and the stories all together. We made everything with our own hands including the puppets, the art, the sounds, the lighting, the electrical work and the backgrounds.”

Now, as CEO of his own Toronto-based start-up called Fantasticanta, he is hoping to do the same here, not only for children but youth of all ages.

“We want to help children and young adults to...grow in confidence and maturity. This is to make them more outgoing, [and to foster] positivity and creativity,” he explains. “I believe that when you respect and love others you make the world a better place. And when you make others happy, you feel happy in return. I like to make young adults and specifically people with disabilities happy through different activities and different shows.”

Antony is pursuing his dream; making what he calls the impossible possible, while living with both limited hearing and vision.

“I still have some vision in both eyes but am able to see better with the left than the right,” says Saddik. “I have had numerous surgeries for retinal detachment and I also have glaucoma in both eyes.

I have a cochlear implant on the right that helps with my hearing and at times I will wear a hearing aid on the left, but it doesn't always work.”

Like many Canadians who are deaf-blind, Antony lives independently and uses intervenors to assist him with his daily activities. He says the Canadian Helen Keller Centre (CHKC) has been there for him right from the start. Intervenors are specially trained professionals who act as the eyes and ears of a person who is deafblind, providing them with information about the environment around them and helping them to communicate.

“[Intervenors] help me to see better and to hear better. They support me for shopping and for activities, games, meetings and trips,” explains Saddik. “CHKC has helped me to improve communication with organizations, and they are supporting me for interviews and communication. They have workshops that teach me...and a lot of activities that I've enjoyed doing. They are able to support me with my hearing and vision as it has continued to decline. [CHKC also as-

sists] me in applying for a number of things that I didn't know about. Since I came to Canada, they have supported me with many things, and I have built a good relationship with all management, intervenors and consumers.”

Since graduating, Antony has gained 10 years of experience as a senior software developer. He is interested in database development and management, web development and IT networking. However, having just recently become a permanent resident, he has not yet found a permanent job, which he admits can make life somewhat difficult.

“I need an income so I can pay for my apartment and other things that I enjoy or need, like a second surgery for a Cochlear Implant,” he says, “And of course, I am looking forward to having a girlfriend and later a family and home.”

Unable to wait for that perfect job to come along, Antony used his entrepreneurial spirit to help get Fantasticanta off the ground along with Katrina Clifford, a writer, author and lyricist originally from the United Kingdom. He has received assistance from CHKC intervenors and has been in touch with the Toronto Business Development Centre and the Canadian Council for the Arts.

“They are all supporting me for my project, to be able to start it up and to achieve my goals,” says Saddik. “Impossible things became possible and nothing is now impossible.”



Nancy Longo, Intervenor and Antony Saddik