

## RELAX, RECHARGE, RENEW PROGRAM CELEBRATES A DECADE OF THE TOURISM COMMUNITY GIVING BACK

*Since 2008, the program has provided 540 weekend getaways for parents caring for children with special needs*

TORONTO, August 21 – Tourism Toronto’s weekend getaways program - *Relax, Recharge, Renew* – is celebrating 10 years of providing parents that care for children with special needs a much-deserved break. This first-of-its-kind and award-winning program, rallies the support of Toronto’s tourism and hospitality community that together have provided weekend getaways in Toronto for 540 parents since the start of the program.

*Relax, Recharge, Renew* launched in 2008 as a unique way for the tourism community – including hotels, restaurants and attractions – to give an exceptional Toronto experience for parents that need it the most.

“Ten years ago, we recognized that Tourism Toronto was uniquely positioned within the tourism industry to help local families in need of a break,” said Johanne Bélanger, President and CEO of Tourism Toronto. “Now, thanks to the generosity of more than 150 businesses in the tourism and hospitality community and the dedicated staff at Tourism Toronto, 540 families got the break they deserved – exemplifying the spirit and sense of community that our industry, and Toronto, are known for.”

Nearly every weekend throughout the year, parents are provided a limousine pick-up, a two-night hotel stay, tickets to shows, museums and other attractions, and dining experiences at local restaurants. Their child with special needs is cared for in a high-quality, provincially-funded respite care centre such as Safehaven Project for Community Living.

“Caring for children with complex special needs comes with a significant workload for caregivers,” said Susan Bisailon, CEO for Safehaven Project for Community Living. “What these parents need most is support. A program like *Relax, Recharge, Renew* gives caregivers time for themselves, so they can feel rejuvenated after their weekend in Toronto to keep providing the exceptional care they give each and every day.”

The responses from the families who go on the weekends have been overwhelmingly positive. Bo, a parent who recently took part said, “What a much needed break that was. I couldn't thank you all enough for making it all happen. More importantly, I'm glad to know that this opportunity is made available to other families like ours.”

Throughout the decade, the *Relax, Recharge, Renew* program has been recognized for its achievements including the Corporate Social Responsibility Award from PR News at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C.; the prestigious Community Service Award from Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC); and the Tourism Innovator of the Year Award from the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO). Previous recognition also includes the American Society of Association Executives the “Power of A” Silver Award; and IMEX “Commitment to the Community” award which is a globally-recognized honour awarded annually.

# PRESS RELEASE



Organizations interested in supporting Relax, Recharge, Renew can do so by contacting [toronto@torcvb.com](mailto:toronto@torcvb.com).

## **ADDITIONAL QUOTES:**

“Thank you for this wonderful opportunity. This was by far one of my best weekends. I do not get away very much, and to get away to such an incredible hotel and great restaurants was amazing. Our limo driver from Bennington’s was incredible. He made me feel like I was the most important person in the world...and our waiter at Jack Astor's was the best. He was so personal and friendly, and really made an impression on my sister and myself.”

Karen

“We honestly felt everyone went above and beyond. When we arrived to the hotel, we had a package with goodies and drinks...Everyone we spoke to were very helpful and we made memories with our younger two who have gotten used to taking the backseat to their sister’s needs. It'll be a weekend we'll never forget.”

Kathryn

## **ABOUT TOURISM TORONTO**

Tourism Toronto is the official destination marketing organization for the region, “Canada’s Downtown” – encompassing Toronto, Mississauga and Brampton. With sales and marketing programs in key markets around the world, Tourism Toronto promotes the Toronto region as a remarkable destination for tourists, convention delegates and business travellers. Tourism Toronto operates in partnership with the City of Toronto, the Greater Toronto Hotel Association and the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. For more information please visit [SeeTorontoNow.com](http://SeeTorontoNow.com).

Media contact:

Matt McNama  
Tourism Toronto  
416-994-2258  
[mmcnama@torcvb.com](mailto:mmcnama@torcvb.com)