

on her screen. Carla became concerned, as John has spastic quadriplegic cerebral palsy, and lived alone. If he was hurt, he could end up lying there for days.

Suddenly, a person nicknamed “Lineblack” appeared on the chat channel where Carla and John had met for the game. This person, a woman from the Chicago area whom Carla did not know, said that John had told her that he had hit his head and couldn’t see, and had asked her to find Carla with whom he was playing *Scrabble*.

Carla became extremely concerned. This “can’t see” could be life-threatening, as head injuries often are to people with cerebral palsy. Carla did not want to disconnect from what could be John’s only life-line and asked Lineblack (who had a second phone line) to call her local police to report the incident. Lineblack came back and said that Chicago police would do nothing — they didn’t believe her. Carla asked Lineblack to call the telephone operator in England to get John’s phone number and address — but there were simply too many John Elliots in the U.K. phone directories.

Carla then asked Lineblack in Chicago to stay connected to John and she called the RCMP in Fredericton to get help. She spoke with Cpl. Michael Arseneault, in Fredericton, and impressed upon him the serious nature of the situation. She also identified herself as having cerebral palsy like her friend John, only to a lesser degree. Cpl. Arseneault took down John Elliot’s e-mail address, as well as the name and location of William Rendell, one of John’s friends that Carla had introduced him to in England, and who lived close by.

Then, Cpl. Arseneault contacted RCMP HQ and the Canadian Interpol link in Ottawa to relay the information. The news of John Elliot’s predicament was then relayed to England, and through a long chain of civilians and police officers, right to William Rendell’s parents, who contacted him and ultimately found John’s whereabouts.

After Carla told me the whole story in detail the next morning, I contacted Mike Woloschuk, who used to be with the (Saint John) *Telegraph Journal*, and now worked for the *Ottawa Citizen*. As a result, the *Telegraph Journal* came to our home to photograph Carla for their paper and articles subsequently appeared in the *Citizen*, *Telegraph Journal*, and the *Daily Gleaner*. Carla was also interviewed for CBC Newsworld.

When Carla went back online and connected with Will Rendell that afternoon, he told her that the media had been over to his house, as well as John Elliot’s. Lineblack also contacted Carla to say that she was also being interviewed by the media. But when the story was aired with the lead in of “and now here is a story of good old-fashioned American ingenuity” needless to say that we were appalled by the inaccuracies reported by the media. Carla’s name was not mentioned, neither was the RCMP — nor was there any mention about the fact that this had been the case of one disabled person helping another, 3,000 miles apart.

In another show, Carla’s name was mentioned once, and again the RCMP not mentioned at all. Instead, the show centered on Lineblack and William Rendell (who did not even know each other). As a matter of fact, the public was led to believe that Lineblack was the one who was engaged in the *Scrabble* game with John and “the unnamed person from Ottawa” (the Ottawa connection, in fact, was the Fredericton RCMP who got in touch with Interpol in Ottawa). Lineblack did not even have the *Scrabble* game program. Despite a flurry of e-mails recommending that they present the full facts, the media never responded to Carla.

John Elliot had been unconscious, laying on the floor with his computer keyboard, for about four hours. He does not remember anything about his ordeal. Thanks to the courtesy account provided by Brunswick Micro Systems in Fredericton, Carla has expanded access to the Internet and is able to fully develop her advocacy work on behalf of persons with disabilities. ❖