

Authoring Her Success

To begin each journey, you must start with the first step. Melissa Martz began her journey in 1977 when she was 11 months old. Like many children, she was referred by her pediatrician. Diagnosed with a mild form of cerebral palsy, Melissa initially received physiotherapy and occupational therapy as she showed no interest in walking in her early days. If you had told her family back then that she would go on to not only compete but win, for three consecutive years, the five-kilometre race in her age category at Canada's only competitive walking race, they might not have believed you!

Over the years, Melissa benefited from speech therapy, nursery school, swimming lessons, and the list could go on. The support that her parents received from KidsAbility, of course then affectionately known as the Rotary Centre, helped them to realize that Melissa had a great future despite any disability.

When Melissa thinks back on her days at KidsAbility, she remembers therapists like Kathy, her educational assistant Wendy and even her bus driver Bill who all made a mark in her life. The first word that comes to mind when Melissa thinks about KidsAbility is "love."

Today, Melissa is celebrating a 20-year career as a Nanny. To her list of accomplishments she can also add "author". A local and published writer of two books, Melissa wanted to help tell the stories of the thousands of children and youth whose lives were impacted by KidsAbility over the years. This book wouldn't have been possible without her talent, time and dedication, having taken a leadership role in showcasing what Potential Realized has looked like over the years through the stories of our alumni, staff, donors, volunteers, Rotarians and community partners.

In 2007, as KidsAbility was marking its 50th anniversary, Melissa was invited to share her story as part of the celebrations. That initial invitation sparked Melissa to become a volunteer at special events such as the Kids Can't Wait Radiothon and a donor. She is very proud to say that she was one of the inaugural members of the "I Make a

Difference Club" and that it is gratifying to know that she has helped countless children to receive life-changing therapies through monthly giving and a portion of the sales that she donates from her published books.

When asked what she would say to parents early on their journey at KidsAbility, she replies: "Don't give up on your child. They have a wonderful future ahead of them. And, then, I would share my story with them!"



Melissa Martz

Alumna, Volunteer and Donor