

Investing in a Brighter Future

What does success look like? As a child, for Jason Koehler it meant learning how to take his first steps, how to use a walker and valuable life and social skills. However, today, success is a career as an Investment Advisor with a large firm in Ontario and living life to its fullest.

Faced with the unknown, Jason's parents brought him to KidsAbility at the suggestion of local pediatrician Dr. Thornback. At the age of two, Jason began a journey that would become foundational in his growth to help shape the man he would become. Jason benefited from physio and occupational therapy, as well as many different life and social skills groups, eventually receiving a diagnosis of cerebral palsy. "It was at that point that my parents realized I wasn't going to be like other kids. I had some unique challenges. Unaware of the extent of what the disability was going to be, KidsAbility certainly gave them, if nothing else, an emotional support structure," says Jason.

One of Jason's favourite memories was in the junior kindergarten classroom at KidsAbility School. He fondly remembers taking all of the sand from the classroom sand bin and putting it into the water bin. For him this was significant and still brings a smile to his face. "I probably got in trouble for that at the time, but as a little guy, I thought that was a fantastic idea. It made me feel like a normal kid. There, I wasn't someone with a disability. I was just 'Jason' doing things that a normal kid would do."

Throughout his early years and into his teens, KidsAbility provided Jason with the programs, therapy and support to teach him the skills he would need. One program in particular was an after school youth program that gave him exposure to kids in similar situations such as facing the challenges of being a teenager with special needs.

As an adult, Jason felt a pull to give back to the organization that made a difference in his life. Jason joined a group that he was very familiar with: Rotary. Joining the Rotary Club of Waterloo, where he was a member for six years, Jason had the opportunity to devote his energy, talents and abilities

to supporting the important work of Rotary, including being a strong supporter of KidsAbility. Jason is still actively involved in the community and maintains close connections to Rotary.

"I went from rolling around to taking my first steps to being able to walk independently to living on my own. These are things that took years, but if I wouldn't have had patience — my own to deal with it and my family's to cope with it — the support of KidsAbility to get me through it, these things wouldn't have happened."



Jason Koehler

Alumnus and Former Rotarian