

Contact:

Dayna Giorgio | Communications & Media Relations
519.886.8886 ext. 1309 | dgiorgio@kidsability.ca

For Immediate Release

Potential Realized for Over 60,000 Local Children and Youth!

Waterloo, ON, June 5, 2017 – For each of the over 60,000 children and youth with special needs impacted by the services offered at KidsAbility, “Potential Realized” takes on its own meaning unique to that individual. Whether for a child it means learning how to walk or talk, learning social skills to make a friend or for a youth, life skills that lead to independence — thanks to the foundational vision and support of Rotary since 1957 — thousands of children and youth over the years have been empowered with the skills and support that they have needed close to home.

“Rotary and KidsAbility have a long, and proud history in our community. In fact, if it wasn’t for the incredible vision and support of our local Rotarians, we wouldn’t even exist. Rotarians saw the need for quality services close to home,” says Linda Kenny, chief executive officer of KidsAbility. “Sixty years of service to our community is a celebration of the over 60,000 children and youth who have received critical therapies and services to realize their own full potential.”

Hosted by the Rotary Clubs of Kitchener and Waterloo, the 10th Annual Rotary Fun Day is a celebration fitting of KidsAbility’s diamond anniversary as the organization’s property in Waterloo will be transformed into a carnival specifically designed for the children, youth and families served by KidsAbility.

“The KidsAbility Fun Day is a great event that our members look forward to every year,” says Bill Proctor, District Governor, Rotary District 7080 and Past President of the Rotary Club of Kitchener. “KidsAbility has been a major focus of my club since we created the Rotary Children’s Centre in 1957. Today, that commitment is shared by all of the Kitchener-Waterloo Clubs. Hosting the Fun Day allows us to meet the children and their parents in person; to see the smiles and to hear the laughter. We are very extremely proud of our 60 years of association with KidsAbility and are continually amazed at the wonders they perform, we look forward to many more years of helping to see ‘Potential Realized.’”

As part of this special event, the Honourable Bardish Chagger will join local Rotarians to plant a maple tree in honour of KidsAbility’s six decades of service to the community. The maple, chosen specifically in celebration of Canada’s 150th anniversary, will serve as a reminder of the deep roots the organization has in the community. As Rotarians put shovel to ground this coming weekend, they will be surrounded by some of the over 60,000 children and youth who have benefited from services at KidsAbility — an organization founded and supported by Rotarians since 1957.

In the 1920's, Rotarians made the important decision to dedicate themselves to making a positive impact in the lives of children and youth with special needs. Between the 1920's to the 1950's, Rotary Club members organized medical clinics and transported children to Toronto hospitals when they couldn't be seen locally. It was clear that a local and permanent facility was needed for this growing community. After much planning and fundraising, in 1957, Rotarians cut the ribbon to the newly built K-W Rotary Children's Centre. This humble site on King Street was the beginning of what was to become a beacon of hope for local children and youth with special needs and their families.

"When we first opened our doors in the 50's, KidsAbility saw just under 200 children with predominantly physical challenges such as spina bifida, cerebral palsy and the effects of polio. Last year, we provided therapy and support services to a record 6,963 children and youth across Waterloo Region and Guelph-Wellington with challenges ranging from mild to complex," says Ms. Kenny.

Providing services that are accessible, seamless, and focused on client and family-centred care remain core priorities for KidsAbility. In order to be as close as possible to where our clients and families live, learn, work and play, KidsAbility offers a wide range of services at multiple sites in Cambridge, Fergus, Guelph, Kitchener, Mount Forest and Waterloo.

"As we celebrate 60 Years of Potential Realized, we must also look and plan for the future generations of children and youth. We are committed to continually changing and evolving to meet the needs of our community and remain forever grateful for the faithful support of each Rotarian across our community," says Ms. Kenny.

Background Information

Founded and supported by Rotarians since 1957, KidsAbility™ Centre for Child Development is the recognized leader in Waterloo Region and Guelph-Wellington for empowering children and youth with a wide range of complex special needs.

KidsAbility's passionate and talented team of staff and volunteers provided therapy and support services to 6,963 children and youth with special needs last year. Services are provided at sites in Cambridge, Fergus, Guelph, Kitchener, Mount Forest and Waterloo.

KidsAbility serves children and youth from birth to school exit with special needs ranging from communication, physical, general and developmental delays, to more complex diagnoses such as autism, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and other rare medical syndromes. KidsAbility provides therapy and support to many children who do not yet have a diagnosis.

Although funded primarily through the Ontario Ministry of Children & Youth Services, KidsAbility Foundation inspires and engages community partners, individuals and groups to help make a difference in children's lives through donations. Donations raised annually allow KidsAbility to serve as many children as possible through innovative programs, talented therapists and advanced technology.

Through the generous support of donors, KidsAbility empowers thousands of children and youth with special needs to realize their full potential every year. There are 942 children who are waiting for services at KidsAbility. With continued support from our community, more children will be able to access the services they need to live the best lives possible and realize their full potential.